VARIETY

The Confessions of Pamela Anderson

By Tatiana Siegel

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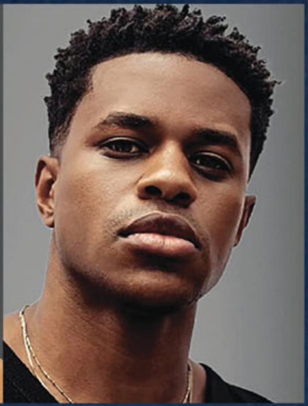

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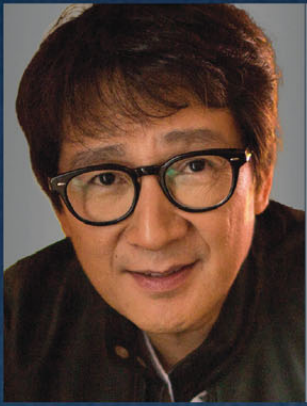

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(Cover) Set Design: Lucy Holt; Stylist: Rebecca Ramsey; Make-Up: Eileen Madrid/Sharleen Collins Cosmetics; Hair: Sara Tintari/Balmain Hair Couture; Manicurist: Natalie Minerva/Forward Artists; Producer: Alexey Galetskiy; Dress: Saint Laurent; Shoes: Jimmy Choo; (This page) Top & skirt: Saint Laurent; Shoes: Jimmy Choo

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The Story of 'Pam & Tommy,' Told by the Woman Who Lived It

CO-EDITORS-IN-CHIEF

Cynthia Littleton

Ramin Setoodeh

Pamela Anderson spent the '90s trying to hide. As one of the most famous women on Earth, she had her privacy violated in a way that past generations of stars couldn't have imagined. A sex tape she made with her husband Tommy Lee was stolen from her Malibu home in 1995, uploaded online and spread worldwide at the speed of the internet. Anderson became the object of late-night mockery and press-stalking. Worst of all, no one really saw her as a victim; the public blamed her for a theft that robbed her of her dignity, and she became a punchline.

"Pam & Tommy," the Hulu miniseries that aired last year, tried to reframe the narrative of Anderson's public humiliation through a more sympathetic lens. But this, too, proved to be problematic. The series was produced by a group of men who didn't ask Anderson's permission to retell her story. And so she kept quiet about the miniseries, even as she bristled at the image of Lily James decked out in prosthetics, playing her during the height of her "Baywatch" fame. She never needed to watch "Pam & Tommy" — she had lived it.

Now Anderson is finally ready to tell her story. Next week, she'll release two recollections: "Love, Pamela," a book that traces her rise from a small-town girl on Vancouver Island to Hollywood icon; and a Netflix documentary, "Pamela, a Love Story," with old archival videos and new interviews. For this week's cover story, Anderson sat down with our executive editor of film and media Tatiana Siegel, determined to dismantle the preconceived notions about her. You won't forget this profile packed with surprising revelations — from her friendship with Julian Assange to an alleged incident of harassment on the set of "Home Improvement" involving Tim Allen.

Elsewhere in the issue, we plunge into one of the most exciting times of year. The days after the Oscar nominations mean that it's now time for voters to catch up on films they might have missed — especially "Everything Everywhere All at Once" (which led the pack with 11 nods), followed by "The Banshees of Inisherin" and "All Quiet on the Western Front" (nine nominations each). These films were widely forecast for success, but the most exciting Oscar narratives may be the surprises. "Underdog" may not be a strong enough word to describe first-time nominee Andrea Riseborough, who was able to secure a best actress nod for the little-seen indie "To Leslie," thanks to a word-of-mouth campaign with A-list supporters. "The idea that you need endless resources, I don't think that's necessarily true," Riseborough told us before the nominations. She turned out to be right.

Contributors

Executive editor of film and media **Tatiana Siegel** politely declined the vegan coffee creamer while breakfasting with longtime animal rights activist Pamela Anderson in her Beverly Hills Hotel bungalow.

Digital news director **Zack Sharf** spent Sundance working the room at the Variety Studio, rounding up the buzziest news and most quotable interviews. He previously covered Variety studios at Cannes and Toronto.

Senior awards editor **Clayton Davis**, who wrote about key takeaways from the Oscar noms, couldn't attend the in-person announcement. He had a 3:30 a.m. call time for hair and makeup for ABC News — even without much hair.

Photographer **Greg Swales** captured Pamela Anderson in Los Angeles on Jan. 16: "I knew it was going to be a dream photo shoot, but I was not expecting the level of magical, explosive and physical performance that Pam gave — a true artist of movement and expression."

Littleton: Photograph by Dan Doperalski; Setoodeh: Photograph by Alexi Lubomirski

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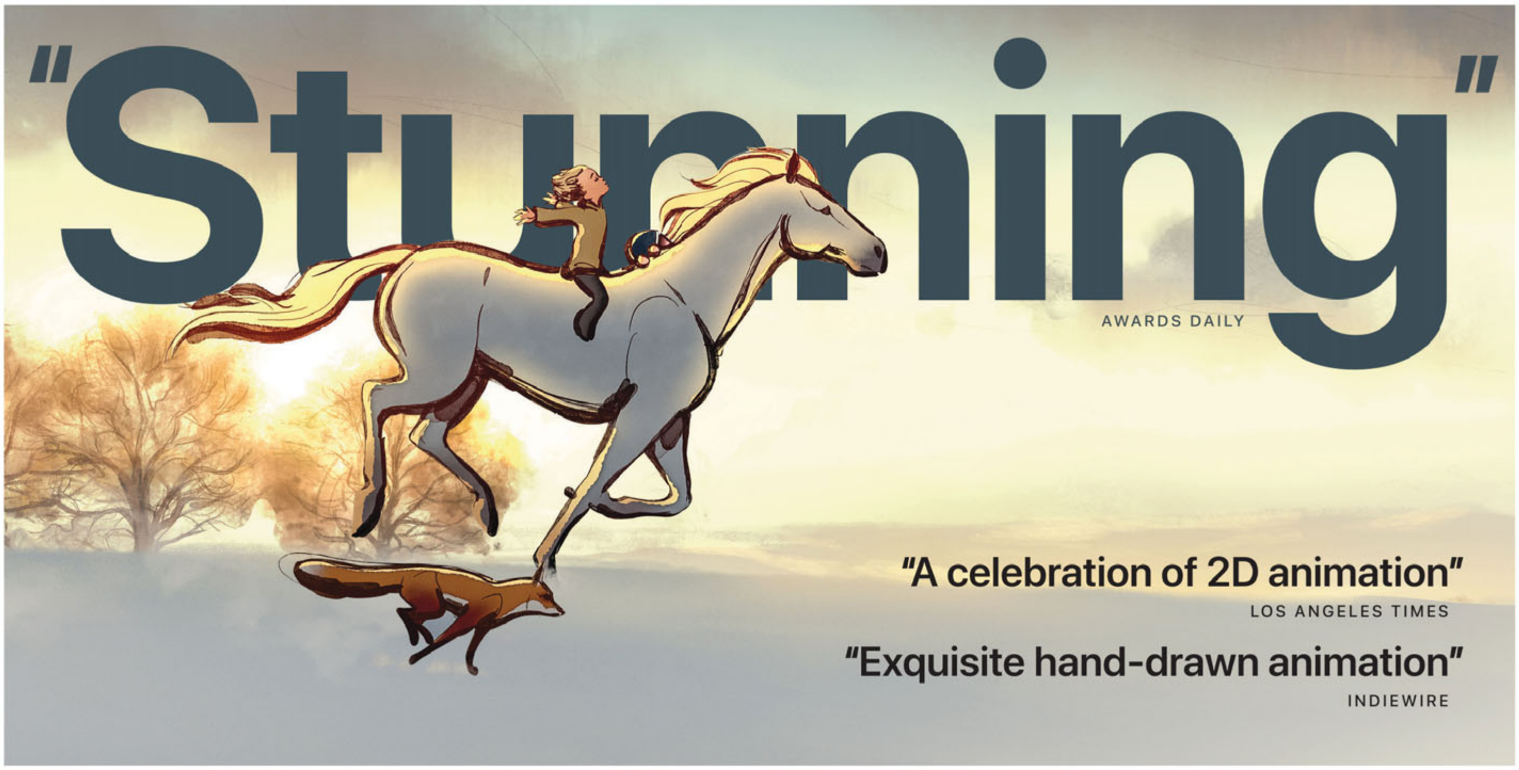

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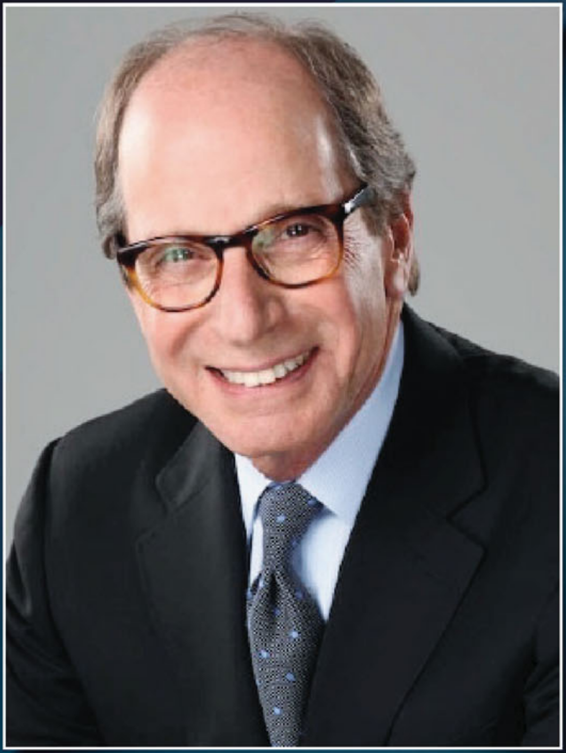

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The Bumpy Part of the Stream

Hasty cuts in series orders and renewals reflect TV's tough transition from linear to digital platforms

By Michael Schneider

"Mayfair Witches" was among the series AMC Networks touted at TCA; many other AMC shows didn't survive the ax.

Alfonso Bresciani/AMC

The promise of an unlimited future for television content has run into the economic realities of a business driven by unpredictable market forces. A significant shift in strategy for the largest producers of content has recently become apparent: Major networks and streamers have reversed course and canceled previously ordered or renewed series — and even halted plans to launch already produced programs. Every outlet scraps a series or two from time to time. But the past 12 months have seen an unprecedented number

> **It is a tough landscape, because everybody's dealing with all the same economic pressures. It is definitely a reset moment.”**
> **—Nicole Clemens, Paramount Television Studios**

of about-face decisions on greenlights and renewals.

As executives, producers and top creative talent descended on the Television Critics Assn. press tour this month in Pasadena, the overriding theme of conversations was the state of the cable and pay TV marketplace, which is still slogging through a difficult transition from linear to streaming.

“It is a tough landscape, because everybody's dealing with all the same economic pressures,” Paramount Television Studios president Nicole Clemens told *Variety*. “And now people are really scrutinizing the business behind pickups. It is definitely a reset moment.”

Just when consumers were trained to expect streaming shows to remain on demand forever, entities like HBO Max have started culling their libraries, removing some lesser-watched fare to save money on license fees and residuals.

It was probably inevitable. Although consumers got used to the notion that shows would always be available, that wasn't the case for most of TV history. Programming had windows: first-run, reruns, home entertainment, followed by several cycles of syndication — cable, local TV and then ... perhaps nowhere but on a shelf. Streaming took away those windows, and the profit that came with that backend.

“You just can't take this infinite amount of money, spend it on something, and then just dump it in a single [window],” says John Landgraf, FX Content and FX Prods. chairman. There are no plans to pull FX library content right now, but it can't be ruled out, he says.

“If you have a streaming platform that has 10,000 to 20,000 pieces of content, it's very hard to create a user interface that allows people to really find and discover every single piece of content on that streaming platform,” Landgraf says. “A certain amount of it gets stale; it's not getting usage.”

Then there's the case of current shows that were previously greenlighted or renewed — and in many cases in the can — yet retroactively have been canceled. For example, HBO Max rescinded its second-season renewal of “Minx” after it had been filmed; Starz picked it up instead. (Starz, meanwhile, unrenewed “Dangerous Liaisons” in December after picking it up for a second season in November.)

That kind of reassessment is going on all over town. Paramount+ canceled a movie sequel to the Comedy Central series “Workaholics” in January, just days before production was set to start. TNT/TBS yanked new seasons of shows like “Chad” (which wound up at Roku) and “Snowpiercer.” AMC Networks, smarting from its struggle to launch boutique streamer AMC+, has axed several series that had been greenlighted — and again, in some cases, already shot — as part of a programming write-down. Among the cancellations were “Invitation to a Bonfire” and “Demascus,” as well as second seasons of “Moonhaven” and “61st Street.”

“Our industry is experiencing a necessary period of reflection and correction,” Dan McDermott, president of AMC Entertainment and AMC Studios, told reporters. Despite shelving so many shows, AMC Networks was still at TCA to tout new series that had survived the ax, including “The Walking Dead: Dead City,” “Mayfair Witches” and “Lucky Hank.”

“Factors including rising inflation, a challenging ad market, too many shows and an overreliance on streaming metrics that don't necessarily deliver profitability have caused most content companies, including ourselves, to take stock and recalibrate their forward path,” he added. “This has been a difficult but important process.”

Throughout TV history, plenty of shows have been ordered and/or filmed before being shelved — but usually, those cancellations were issued because a show turned out so terrible that it didn't deserve to see the light of day. This time is a bit different: Platforms that were in the volume game (where nearly every show got a second season, regardless of viewership) are starting to temper their orders.

“It's a fairly simple thing to see that the measure of success has gone from simple sub growth to, are you monetizing the programming?” MGM+ head Michael Wright told *Variety*. “The analysis everyone's doing is, does that show make sense? Is there an ROI on this show? Does it make sense in our larger business?”

For that reason Landgraf once again shared his belief that the industry has reached peak TV output, with 599 English-language scripted primetime programs (not including kids' fare) across broadcast, cable and streaming produced in 2022. Landgraf first predicted this in 2015, but he hadn't counted on the streaming boom — and the amount of money that poured into original productions in the late 2010s.

“We're just in this middle inning period of radical transformation from the pre-internet era to the post-internet era,” Landgraf said at TCA. “We're in the really bumpy part of that transition.”

NBC
Night Court

NBC's new rendition of “Night Court” is an example of Hollywood's reliance on reboots and remakes.

Mark Von Holden/Variety

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Broadway’s Box Office Blues

Some shows still hit big, but post-lockdown economics make margins tighter than ever

By Gordon Cox

“Ain’t No Mo’” is among the high-profile Broadway shows that closed only days after opening.

Joan Marcus

The Broadway musical “Beetlejuice” simply refused to die. After a 2019 eviction from its original theater, a relocation and a 2020 shuttering by COVID, the production reopened in April 2022 to an eager fan base. Over the past nine months, “Beetlejuice” regularly grossed more than $1 million a week. Between Christmas and New Year’s it broke the Marquis Theatre box office record with nearly $2.5 million across nine performances.

But despite its otherworldly endurance, its producers just closed the show because they feared it wouldn’t weather the winter.

“We took dips earlier in the summer, more than we had expected,” says Mark Kaufman the executive VP of Warner Bros. Theatre Ventures. “That caused concern.”

In many ways “Beetlejuice,” which closed Jan. 8, encapsulates life on the bifurcated Broadway of 2023 — a place where the hits are still boffo but the misses tank quicker than ever, and even successes are complicated by fast-changing trends in post-lockdown economics.

Along the way, the box office had its best week since 2019 (with $51.9 million earned by 33 productions during the week ending Jan. 1). More broadly comparing this season with that of 2019, the overall numbers point to an industry in recovery.

Yet there have been high-profile disappointments. “KPOP” and “Ain’t No Mo’” posted closing notices just days after opening. The musical adaptation of “Almost Famous” threw in the towel after a few months. “Ohio State Murders” announced it would shutter a month early.

“Broadway is coming back, but there are new paradigms,” says Christine Schwarzman of No Guarantees, which is producing Andrew Lloyd Webber’s upcoming “Bad Cinderella.” “We’re still figuring out what those new paradigms are.”

More theatergoers are waiting until the last minute to buy. For years the best indicator of a show’s health has been its advance sales, with productions racking up massive advances across several months. Now the average advance-sale timeline has dwindled. For many shows, the average advance window is four to six weeks — for others, it’s seven to 10 days.

“Now you don’t have the luxury of resting on your laurels with ‘Oh, I’ve got a million-dollar advance in the bank,’” says Rashad V. Chambers, producer of “Fat Ham.”

Meanwhile, the return of tourism has been a bright spot, with turnout from domestic and international visitors up more than 70% compared with 2021. But Broadway has hit a roadblock in luring back suburbanites.

“Getting the suburbs back is one of the biggest things we still have to do,” says John Johnson, producer of “Mike Birbiglia: The Old Man and the Pool.” “The people coming in six times a year are now coming in twice.”

Confronted by such challenges, producers are pivoting. Many are spending more marketing and advertising dollars on social media. A recently instituted state tax credit may also play a part in a show’s financial planning.

Brian Moreland, producer of fall success “The Piano Lesson,” has also made adjustments. His next show, a revival of “The Wiz,” will premiere in Baltimore and then, in an unusual move, hit the road for 20 weeks before arriving on Broadway in 2024. “Going on the road really mitigates the financial risk of the production,” he says.

Moreland is one of several producers cultivating more diverse audiences. He credits co-producer Kandi Burruss, the singer and Real Housewife of Atlanta, with promoting “Piano Lesson” during her own radio interviews and TV appearances.

For an industry still endeavoring to expand its inclusivity onstage, backstage and in the auditorium, winning over new audiences remains a work in progress. “If we mean it when we say that we want Broadway to change, then we have to be OK if we don’t hit a home run,” says Hunter Arnold (producer on “A Christmas Carol,” “KPOP,” “Chicken & Biscuits” and “Thoughts of a Colored Man”). “We need to accept we’re going to take a bath on that one and then step up and do another one, until it works.”

Remembered: 1941-2023

David Crosby

Jason Isbell and Amanda Shires salute the musician who co-founded the Byrds and CSN

By Chris Willman

David Crosby in 1969 in Los Angeles

Henry Diltz/EPIX

David Crosby, a founding member of the Byrds and Crosby, Stills & Nash in the 1960s and a longtime solo artist, died Jan. 18 at age 81, while in the midst of planning a new album and tour.

Two of the many younger musicians he sang with and championed toward the end of his life were Jason Isbell and Amanda Shires, leading lights in Americana music as well as husband and wife. The pair spoke with *Variety* about Crosby's influence and legacy.

"He was one of a handful of people who invented the kind of music that we make now," Isbell says. "People make up different genres for it. We're telling stories, but we like loud electric guitars and a little bit of psychedelia. So we're making folk rock, like the Byrds did, at the end of the day."

Crosby lived his life as an open book, which made him very human in the eyes of those who revered his work.

"We knew so much about David because on one hand, he was really honest and open, especially toward the end of his life," Isbell says. "And on the other hand, he just lived a long time for somebody who made that many mistakes and had that many resurrections. He still had a really powerful voice, as far as his physical singing voice, but also his personality."

Shires recalls being impressed at his innate understanding of music theory: "He would be naming everything from a fifth to a 13th. He could do the theory and speak it, but it was so natural to him that you couldn't tell that there was as much thought about it as there was."

Crosby found happiness in art and nature. "He loved poetry," Shires says. "He loved flowers; we talked a lot about Casa Blanca lilies." And his love never died for the music of fellow legend and ex Joni Mitchell, whose debut album he produced in 1967.

"I always liked hearing him talk about Joni," Isbell says. "He talked about Joni as though they still spent every day together, like it was 1969," In Crosby's estimation, Mitchell "was the most talented member of that whole group [of musicians], better than the rest of 'em put together."

Crosby was also comfortable in his own skin, even with his well-earned reputation as a curmudgeon.

"David had a conscience and a big heart that a lot of classic rock stars either didn't start out with or lost along the way," Isbell says. "He had run a lot of his old friends off, and he mentioned that a lot. But he was proud of the person that he had become in his old age, and able to live with those regrets. "

In fact, the strength of his family ties and his marriage of nearly 35 years to wife Jan was a source of pride, after a long struggle with substance abuse that led to a five-month prison term in Texas in 1986.

"David and Jan were together for a long time, and equals in a lot of ways," Isbell says. "He'd committed himself to being a good, honest person, and even with all the mistakes that he'd made, that allowed him to be at peace."

Crosby wasn't shy about discussing the drama of his life, nor the gift of his strong tenor voice.

"The first time I heard him sing in a room, when we were rehearsing to play at the Newport Folk Festival, I asked him straight up: 'I don't want to offend you, but how the hell does your voice still sound like that? I know your history,'" Isbell says. "He said, 'I've tried everything I could to kill it, and it just wouldn't die. So I guess I have a responsibility to share it with people as long as I can.'"

Major Takeaways From the Oscar Noms

From legends to blockbuster moneymakers, the Academy struck a healthy balance with its choices

By Clayton Davis

Hit dramedy “Everything Everywhere All At Once” is an Oscar-nom darling.

Allyson Riggs/A24

AWARDS CIRCUIT

An awards ceremony the public can get excited about? That’s a concept Oscar producers can drive home over the next seven weeks.

From the robust showing of popcorn movies to the recognition of some of the most respected stars of the past four decades to the embrace of new faces, this year’s nominations offer something for everyone.

Here are four highlights from the Oscar-nom announcements.

Show Us the Money!

The domestic box office average of the 10 best picture nominees stands at $157 million and counting — the third highest of any slate in the past 25 years. That’s an encouraging sign for the exhibition business as it tries to rebound from the pandemic.

With record-breaking grossers like Paramount’s “Top Gun: Maverick” and 20th Century Studios’ “Avatar: The Way of Water” receiving nods, along with populist hits like A24’s “Everything Everywhere All at Once” and Warner Bros.’ “Elvis,” audiences will be more familiar with the lineup than in previous years. That could yield higher broadcast ratings, which the Oscars desperately seek.

Ain’t Nothing but a Number

As “The White Lotus” star Jennifer Coolidge said during her Critics Choice acceptance speech this month: “It’s not over till you’re dead.” Indeed, a theme of legacy and admiration emerges from a survey of the Oscar nominees across all 23 categories.

The comeback stories of Brendan Fraser (“The Whale”) and Ke Huy Quan (“Everything Everywhere”) — nominated for best actor and supporting actor, respectively — have tapped into the cultural zeitgeist, creating some of the season’s most touching moments.

Angela Bassett, 64, made a triumphant return to the Oscars in supporting actress with “Black Panther: Wakanda Forever,” 29 years after playing Tina Turner in “What’s Love Got to Do With It.” Similarly, Jamie Lee Curtis’ first nom for “Everything Everywhere” caps an astonishing career marked by roles in a range of genre movies — which the Academy traditionally snubs.

Composer John Williams, 90, is the oldest nominee in any competitive awards category for his work on “The Fabelmans,” while supporting actor nom Judd Hirsch, 87, is the second oldest in his category’s history. Hirsch’s bid arrives 42 years after his first for “Ordinary People” (1980), surpassing Henry Fonda’s record of 41 years between acting noms.

The First-Timers Club

The Actors Branch is more welcoming than ever, as signaled by the 16 first-time nominees across the four acting categories.

For the first time since 1934, the best actor lineup consists solely of newcomers: Austin Butler (“Elvis”), Colin Farrell (“The Banshees of Inisherin”), Fraser, Paul Mescal (“Aftersun”) and Bill Nighy (“Living”).

The hugely effective grassroots campaign for surprise best actress nominee Andrea Riseborough for “To Leslie” should inspire other underseen performers to go for the gold, even when their studios don’t have the financial means to do so.

And then there are the Daniels, the dynamic filmmaking duo of “Everything Everywhere,” who augur a bright future for cinema in the same category where maestro Steven Spielberg is nominated.

Can’t Stop the Music

With stellar original song nominees from some of the year’s best movies, the Oscar producers can create a telecast that’ll keep viewers engaged for the duration. An eclectic mix of genres and vocalists are represented, so multiple generations have something to grab on to.

I recommend kicking off with the ultimate dance number, “Naatu Naatu” from “RRR,” and closing with Super Bowl headliner Rihanna delivering the soaring “Lift Me Up” from “Wakanda Forever.” TikTok users will be hooked on Sofia Carson singing “Applause” from “Tell It Like a Woman.” Older demographics will groove to David Byrne jamming barefoot out on “This Is the Life” from “Everything Everywhere.” And every living “monster” will surrender to the magic of Oscar winner Lady Gaga’s “Hold My Hand” from “Top Gun: Maverick.”

OUR TOWN

JUST FOR VARIETY

by Marc Malkin

If anyone was hoping **Alejandro González Iñárritu** (1) would change his mind about directing a superhero movie, I don't have good news for ya.

The Oscar-winning filmmaker doubled down on his dislike of the tentpole genre when I caught up with him at the recent BAFTA Tea Party in Beverly Hills. Calling superheroes "sad figures," Iñárritu said, "I see heroes every day. I see beautiful people really going through very difficult situations and doing incredible things. And that is the people that I kind of connect with. But these kinds of superpower heroes, really do we need that?"

He continued, "If you need that, is there something missing ... instead of admiring what we have, the possibilities that we have?"

Iñárritu first made headlines for blasting superhero movies back in 2014, when he called such films "cultural genocide."

• • •

Alan Cumming (2) was never a fan of reality competition shows, so he wasn't sure why the producers of "The Traitors," the hit series from the Netherlands, wanted him to host Peacock's U.S. version. But he took a look at the original show — think an elaborate game of Mafia — and met with the producers, who wanted him to host while doing his best "James Bond villain." "I think it's great to be open to different things," Cumming says on this week's "Just for Variety" podcast. "And also sometimes you have the most fun in the most random places. Doing 'The Traitors' was hilarious."

Next up, Cumming is jetting to Los Angeles to return as host of AARP's Movies for Grownups Awards on Jan. 28. Asked when he realized he was a grown-up, the 57-year-old actor laughed and said it was about 13 years ago, when he was cast as Eli Gold on "The Good Wife": "I remember I said, 'Why are they asking me? He's a middle-aged guy in a suit.' But then I went, 'Wait, I'm a middle-aged guy, and if I put a suit on — bingo!'"

• • •

David Duchovny (3) gives a purposely cringeworthy performance of John Legend's "Ordinary People" in Kenya Barris' new Netflix dramedy "You People." "We shot that at the height of COVID, so the most dangerous thing you could do is sing," the actor tells me.

The set was cleared for him to lip-sync to the recording while pretending to play the piano. "I couldn't perform to anybody," Duchovny says. "It was so sad. After I finished singing — well, lip-syncing — they had to air out the room for an hour."

• • •

Josh Duhamel (4) says he was most worried about his breath when he filmed a little bedroom romp with **Jennifer Lopez** (5) in Jason Moore's Amazon Prime Video rom-com, "Shotgun Wedding." "I had gum in my mouth, and halfway through the scene, [Lopez] was like, 'Are you chewing gum?'" Duhamel recalls. "I was like, 'Yeah.' She was like, 'Spit that gum out.'"

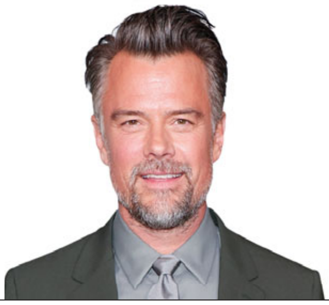
On a serious note, Duhamel says he had a near fatal accident in the Dominican Republic while trying to take video of a cove where the film was shooting: "These giant powerful waves [were] crashing up ... and a rogue wave comes up and knocks me straight back over the tops of these rocks — they call them razor rocks. I had a hole in my hand, all over my legs and feet. I'm thankful for those rocks or I would have pulled over the cliff."

(1)

(2)

(3)

(4)

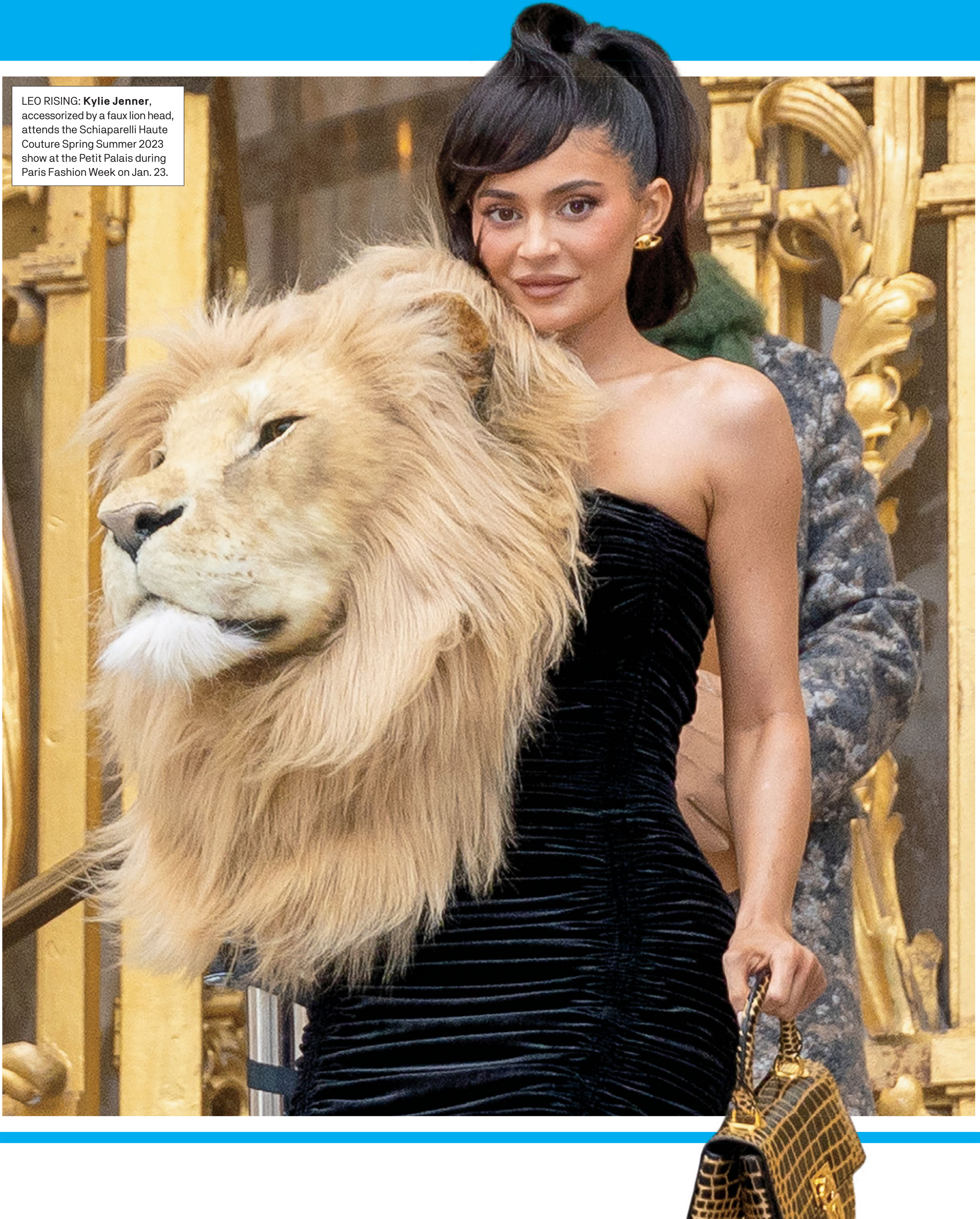


(5)

Iñárritu: Gilbert Flores/Variety; Cumming: Arturo Holmes/Getty Images; Duchovny, Lopez: Axelle/Bauer-Griffin/FilmMagic (2); Duhamel: Christopher Polk/Variety

EXPOSURE

Edited by Marc Malkin



LEO RISING: **Kylie Jenner**, accessorized by a faux lion head, attends the Schiaparelli Haute Couture Spring Summer 2023 show at the Petit Palais during Paris Fashion Week on Jan. 23.

Marc Piasecki/WireImage

Jan. 19-26

Sundance Film Festival

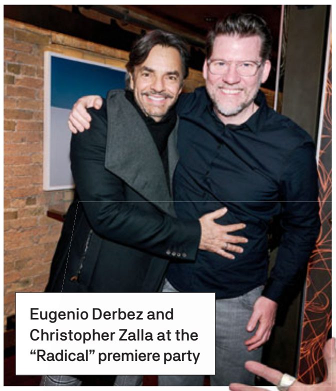
Park City, Utah

The festival returned to an in-person event after going virtual for two editions due to the COVID pandemic. On opening night, **Dakota Johnson** earned nervous laughter while presenting her friend and collaborator **Luca Guadagnino** with the International Icon Award at the inaugural "A Taste of Sundance" dinner. She joked about turning down the role of the peach in "Call Me by Your Name," the filmmaker's award-winning queer coming-of-age story starring **Timothée Chalamet** and **Armie Hammer**. "Thank God, though," Johnson deadpanned. "I would have been another woman that Armie Hammer would have tried to eat." Hammer's career nosedived in recent years after several women accused him of sexual assault and having cannibalistic fetishes. Johnson then praised Guadagnino's "Bones and All," starring Chalamet and **Taylor Russell** as lovers who enjoy eating human flesh. "Who knew cannibalism was so popular?" Johnson cracked.

Jeremy O. Harris and Dakota Johnson at Gucci's premiere party for "Invisible Beauty"

Noah Galvin and Ben Platt at the "Theater Camp" premiere party

Nicole Holofcener, Julia Louis-Dreyfus and *Variety*'s Ramin Setoodeh at the *Variety* Sundance cover party, presented by Macro



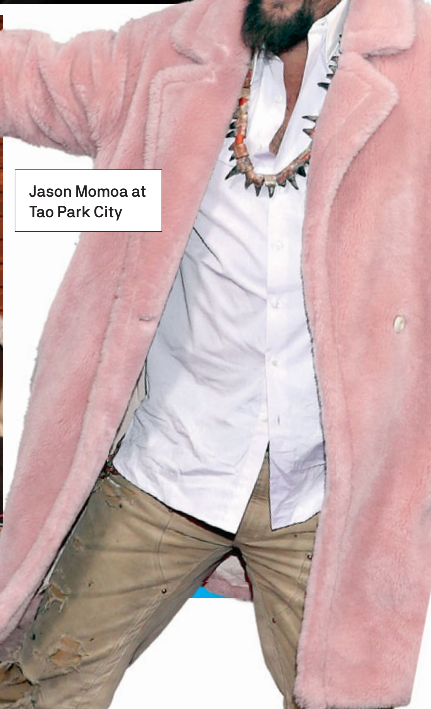
Eugenio Derbez and Christopher Zalla at the "Radical" premiere party

Ben Whishaw at the "Passages" premiere

Meredith Marks and Matt Rogers at the Meredith Marks x GLAAD Celebration

Thuso Mbedu and The Gotham Film & Media Institute's Jeffrey Sharp at the Gotham Sundance Dinner in celebration of the Sidney Poitier Initiative

Boots Riley, Colman Domingo and Danai Gurira at *Variety* x Audible Cocktails and Conversations



Jason Momoa at Tao Park City

Harris/Johnson: Neilson Barnard/Getty Images for Gucci; Galvin/Platt: Vivien Killilea/Getty Images for Acura; Holofcener/Louis-Dreyfus/Setoodeh, Riley/Domingo/Gurira: John Salangsang/Variety (2); Zalla/Derbez: Photograph by Michael Buckner; Whishaw: Monica Schipper/Getty Images; Marks/Rogers: Anna Webber/Getty Images for GLAAD; Mbedu/Sharp: Leon Bennett/Getty Images

EXPOSURE

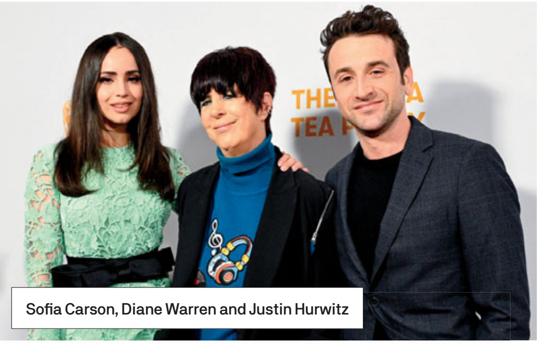
Janelle Monáe

Jan. 14

BAFTA Tea Party

Four Seasons, Beverly Hills

The annual afternoon reception usually takes place the day before the Golden Globes; this year it was pushed to coincide with the Critics Choice Awards. It also happened just three days after the SAG Award nominations were announced. "I was in bed, and I usually never listen to the announcements because the stakes feel so high," **Stephanie Hsu**, who earned a nom for her work in "Everything Everywhere All at Once," told *Variety*. "But I woke up literally at the moment they were making the announcements. I was like, 'Let me scroll the internet a little bit,' and I saw an image with me on it, and I was like, 'Is that —? Wait a minute.' And then of course, the texts and calls started blowing up my phone."



Sofia Carson, Diane Warren and Justin Hurwitz

Cate Blanchett and Nina Hoss

FRIENDS SUPPORTING FRIENDS

Stephanie Hsu

Sheryl Lee Ralph

Jan. 15

Critics Choice Awards

Fairmont Century Plaza, Century City

Sheryl Lee Ralph delivered a powerful acceptance speech when she took home the trophy for supporting actress in a comedy series for her work in "Abbott Elementary." "To all of you watching here, come close to the screen and listen," she said. "People don't have to like you. People don't have to love you. They don't even have to respect you. But when you look in the mirror, you better love what you see."

S.S. Rajamouli

Matt Smith and Milly Alcock

Jeremy Allen White

Troy Kotsur and Angela Bassett

Carson/Warren/Hurtiz, Blanchett/Hoss, Monáe: Gilbert Flores/Variety; Hsu: Marc Malkin; Critics' Choice Awards: Photographs by Michael Buckner

Jan. 17

‘Poker Face’ Premiere

Hollywood Legion Theater, Hollywood

Show creator **Rian Johnson** says the mystery-of-the-week format — **Natasha Lyonne** stars in the 10-episode series as a woman who helps solve crimes through her ability to quickly know if someone is lying — was inspired by “Columbo” and “Quantum Leap.” “All of these things from TV I was watching as a kid and sitting on the rug in front of my TV is the heart of what I am trying to get at,” he told *Variety*. Star **Benjamin Bratt** said, “It reminds me of when I was a kid in the ’70s with the NBC murder mysteries. It was my jam. It was family viewing. … It reminds me of ‘Vanishing Point.’ And of course, ‘Columbo.’ I really appreciated Rian’s intent to replicate that; it brings the warmth that comes from that nostalgia type of viewing.”

Clea DuVall and Maya Rudolph

Rian Johnson, Benjamin Bratt, Natasha Lyonne and Janicza Bravo

Jan. 18

‘Teen Wolf: The Movie’ Premiere

Harmony Gold, Hollywood

Tyler Posey opened up about being sober and returning to play Scott McCall six years after the original MTV supernatural drama series ended in 2017. “It was the first time I was in ‘Teen Wolf’ sober. I was a pothead before. I was always high,” the actor told *Variety*. “So it’s nice to be present and fully aware.” “Teen Wolf” creator **Jeff Davis** and co-star **Colton Haynes** hinted at sequels to the movie. “Jeff has said openly in multiple panels that there have been talks about maybe wanting to do two more. I don’t know how that’s gonna happen,” said Haynes, adding, “To all the fans, just remember that it’s never the end.”

Armani Jackson, Jeff Davis and Tyler Posey

Colton Haynes and Holland Roden

Jan. 13

AFI Awards

Four Seasons, Beverly Hills

Al Pacino delivered impromptu remarks instead of the traditional benediction. He recalled being quite drunk his first time at the Oscars; he was a nominee for his work in Sidney Lumet’s 1973 film “Serpico.” “I was young and crazy,” Pacino said. “Drugs and alcohol were my feed. They helped me through a lot of stuff, I have to admit. I’m not advocating it. I’m just talking here.”

Netflix’s Ted Sarandos and Disney’s Bob Iger

Al Pacino

Ayo Edebiri, Steven Spielberg, Quinta Brunson, Warner Bros. Discovery’s David Zaslav and Warner Bros. Television’s Channing Dungey

Gina Prince-Bythewood and Viola Davis

Michelle Yeoh and Jordan Peele

Poker Face: Christopher Polk/Variety (2); Sarandos/Iger, Edebiri/Spielberg/Brunson/Zaslav/Dungey, Prince-Blythewood/Davis, Yeoh/Peele: Photographs by Michael Buckner; Pacino: Michael Kovac/Getty Images for AFI; Teen Wolf: Gilbert Flores/Variety (2)

Like You've Never Seen Her Before

With a new tell-all memoir and documentary, the 'Baywatch' star strikes back

BY
TATIANA
SIEGEL

PHOTOGRAPHS
BY
GREG
SWALES

On the first day of shooting

“Home Improvement” in April 1991, Pamela Anderson emerged from her dressing room on the Walt Disney Studios lot and found series star Tim Allen loitering in the hallway in a bathrobe. This seemed normal to the 23-year-old budding actress, but it wasn’t. “He opened his robe and flashed me quickly — completely naked underneath,” Anderson writes in her soon-to-be-released memoir, “Love, Pamela.” “He said it was only fair, because he had seen me naked. *Now we’re even*.”

“I laughed uncomfortably,” she writes.

The incident, which unfolded just 18 months after Anderson left her small-town home on Vancouver Island and quickly became a Playboy goddess (which is how Allen saw her naked), offers a window into the liberties people have taken because they think they know her. The Allen incident reflects a pattern, in fact, that continued right up until last year, when a group made up of mostly male producers (led by Seth Rogen) felt entitled enough to bring forth a Hulu series about a crime perpetrated against Anderson: the theft and distribution of a videotape that contained footage of her and her then-husband Tommy Lee having sex. It happened during the very early days of the internet, and it changed our perceptions about celebrity and privacy. Naturally, no one asked if Anderson was OK with the series.

So Anderson is no longer laughing, uncomfortably or otherwise. Instead, the “Baywatch” star, who is 55, is taking back her narrative. On Jan. 31, two high-profile projects will launch — the Netflix documentary “Pamela, a Love Story,” directed by Ryan White and produced by her 26-year-old son, Brandon Thomas Lee; and the HarperCollins memoir, featuring haunting vignettes about sexual abuse and jaw-dropping anecdotes like the Allen encounter. (Allen tells *Variety* in a statement, “No, it never happened. I would never do such a thing.”)

What’s refreshing about “Love, Pamela” is that, despite very consciously reclaiming her power, Anderson doesn’t tell her reader how to think. In the hands of another celebrity, the Allen anecdote would have come with a swift verdict. But Anderson just states the facts and lets the reader decide. “I’m not a very judgmental person,” she says. Later on, she sends me a text: “Tim is a comedian, it’s his job to cross the line. I’m sure he had no bad intentions. Times have changed, though. I doubt anyone would try that post #MeToo. It’s a new world.”

For decades, the industry and the media have mistaken Anderson’s introverted nature for vacuity. When she became an international superstar in the ’90s, playing the lifeguard C.J. Parker on “Baywatch,” people associated her character’s New Age cheesiness with her own personality. And even though Anderson has published two other New York Times bestselling books and can quote at length from Proust and Walt Whitman, the bimbo image has stuck.

“Here’s this icon the world thinks they know,” says Netflix VP of independent and documentary film Lisa Nishimura. “The world has tried to create almost like a caricature of who she is. But there’s a depth to this woman and a definite intelligence that she’s ready to really own and to show the world.”

So on a cold and rainy January morning in a bungalow at the Beverly Hills Hotel, Anderson slowly dismantles the myth that she is a one-dimensional sex symbol in a red bathing suit who left behind a trail of failed marriages. Today, in a shapeless linen dress, her feet bare, pink reading glasses atop her head, she says bluntly, “My life has been much more meaningful than a fluffy hat or a sex tape.” A random baby in the next bungalow cries, and she gets up and slides open the curtains to investigate. She turns back to me and adds, “There’s more to me than that.”

Thirty-three years ago, Anderson arrived in L.A. from Canada, a 22-year-old kid escaping an abusive fiancé. Playboy was footing the hotel bill as well as her first-class airfare, hoping that the fresh-faced Labatt’s beer girl might be a potential cover model for the February 1990 edition. In fact, the Playboy scouts had done well: Over time, Anderson would become the next North American bombshell, like Marilyn Monroe before her, and one of the most recognizable women in the world, thanks to a record-setting 11 Playboy covers and “Baywatch.” Along the way, she’d inadvertently usher in the modern tabloid era, with the intrusive glare on her marriage to Lee and that pilfered sex tape that “ruined lives,” as she tells it. Nearly three decades after that debacle upended her life, Anderson was forced to relive the indignity with “Pam & Tommy.”

But Anderson isn’t bitter; she’s even extended an olive branch to Lily James, who plays her in the series. “I said to Netflix, ‘I’d love to invite Lily to the premiere of the movie,’” Anderson says, balancing a piece of toast topped with peanut butter on her palm. “I’ve got nothing against Lily James. She was just doing the job. But the idea of the whole thing happening was just really crushing for me.”

For better or for worse, “Pam & Tommy” became a pop culture sensation and scored 10 Emmy nominations, putting Anderson firmly back into the public eye. Even as the media clamored for her reaction to the series, she remained mum, having already moved back to her tiny hometown of Ladysmith on Vancouver Island. “Assholes,” she says when asked to describe the people behind the Hulu series. “Salt on the wound.” She hasn’t watched a single minute of the show, but she couldn’t escape the billboards promoting James in prosthetics and Sebastian Stan as her heavily tattooed, pierced partner. “It just looked like a Halloween costume to me,” she says.

These days, Anderson is living the mirror version of her 22-year-old self. She wakes up at 4 or 5 a.m., around the same time she used to head home after a night of partying with Lee. She bought the property in Ladysmith from her grandmother decades ago. Her parents take care of her five dogs — adopted from all over

(Previous spread) Set Design: Lucy Holt; Stylist: Rebecca Ramsey; Make-Up: Eileen Madrid/Sharleen Collins Cosmetics; Hair: Sara Tintari/Balmain Hair Couture; Manicurist: Natalie Minerva/Forward Artists; Producer: Alexey Galetskiy; Dress: Vivienne Westwood/Aralda Vintage; (This page) Coat: Chanel/Aralda Vintage; Shoes: Versace

the world — when she's traveling. She's alone for the first time since she can remember. No famous man with whom to share the remote control.

"I'm retracing my childhood steps," she says. "The trees have known me since birth. My feet touched the ground first where I'm living now."

It's where she wrote "Love, Pamela." "I like to call the book my Hail Mary," she says. "It was important to go back and see what I remember and tell one whole story."

"Love, Pamela" is "Fabelmans"-esque in its ability to capture the wonders of childhood in a temperate rainforest abutting a beach, at the same time that it illuminates the pain that Anderson and her younger brother endured while witnessing parental betrayal — in this case her father physically abusing her mother. (The couple, in their 70s, separated when their children were small; they later reconciled and now live together on Anderson's Ladysmith property.)

This early exposure to domestic violence shaped Anderson's choice in men and taught her how to protect herself. Her first serious boyfriend in high school kicked her out of a speeding car. "He pushed me with his foot so hard, I had no choice but to open the door when the car was moving and rolled straight into a ditch," Anderson writes in "Love, Pamela." "Mind you, I landed a perfect gymnast dismount — at high speed." Another time, he tried to run her over as she walked along a sidewalk. "As I matured, I noticed most of my boyfriends were bad — and progressively got worse," she writes. In the book, she details three harrowing incidents of sexual abuse in her life, all before the age of 18. A female babysitter repeatedly molested her as a child. A 25-year-old man raped her when she was 12. And a high school boyfriend and a group of his friends sexually assaulted her.

"Predators look for somebody to do things to that are so humiliating you'd be embarrassed to tell somebody," she says, sitting before a crackling fire, a dog at her feet. "Those kinds of things really color the rest of your life. You block things out or you're gonna deal with it later — and I'm dealing with it now."

Though she never again endured sexual abuse, incidents of domestic violence continued. Lee famously served six months in jail for kicking Anderson as she held their 7-week-old son, Dylan (now 24). While it marked the only time Lee physically abused Anderson, she filed for divorce.

> "I'm not a victim. I've made my choices in my life. Some obviously were made for me, but I've always been able to find myself again."

"I'm not a victim, and I'm not the damsel in distress," Anderson says. "I've made my choices in my life. Some obviously were made for me, but I've always been able to find myself again. And it's created a strong person and a strong parent."

Given everything she's endured, Anderson drew criticism when she said in a 2018 interview that the #MeToo movement "is a bit too much for me." But people process trauma differently. After we speak, she sends me a memory that she'd blocked out of overt sexual harassment on one of her first jobs as a swimsuit model. She sat next to the photographer on the flight to Hawaii, and he kept putting his hand on her leg. "He was much older and ruddy, drooly, lecherous," she says. "Then he whispered to me that I'd be the only girl, that he chose me ... that it would be intimate, no need for hair or makeup people or photography assistants. Just him and me. I was sick to my stomach. I knew it was not good."

As soon as they landed, Anderson flagged a flight attendant, who hid her in the airline's back office until she could get on a flight to Los Angeles alone. "I hope anyone in danger understands they can go to people for help if they are in an unsafe or uncomfortable situation, especially around a lot of people," she says. "You can get to a safe place."

Anderson has never lost her wicked sense of humor, which shines through in the book. She describes one night — wearing acid-washed jeans, a rock 'n' roll T-shirt, sneakers and those athletic socks with little cotton balls sewn on the back — when she was more of her usual observer than a participant at the Playboy Mansion.

She stumbled upon Jack Nicholson having a threesome in a bathroom. "Mr. Nicholson had two beautiful women with him," she writes. "They were all giggling and kissing up against the wall, sliding all over each other. I walked by to use the mirror, bending over the sink to fix my lip gloss. Trying not to look, but I couldn't help myself and caught his eye in the reflection. I guess that got him to the finish line, because he made a funny noise, smiled and said, '*Thanks, dear.*'"

As we revisit that night, she grins at the memory of that lost world. "It was just complete freedom," she says. "It was full of artists, philanthropists, intellectuals, chivalry, beautiful women. It was really an experience."

From the minute she set foot on U.S. soil in 1989, Anderson began dating high-profile men, which became part of the Pamela mystique. She was infatuated with Mario Van Peebles, who she says now was one of her two best boyfriends ever (professional surfer Kelly Slater was the other). One day after her arrival, she met the mogul Jon Peters at the Playboy Mansion and began living at his Bel-Air estate, next to the Reagans' mansion. Peters showered her with expensive clothes, jewelry and cars. She insists Peters never made a move on her during those early years in Los Angeles, a fact that he confirms for this story.

By the time she married Tommy Lee in 1995, at the height of her "Baywatch" fame, she required security whenever she traveled. While introducing her film "Barb Wire" at the Cannes Film Festival three months after the wedding, boats nearly collided as cameramen tried to land a shot of the actress. She was nearly crushed by a mob when an appearance in Uruguay turned into a riot.

In many ways, the "Baywatch" phenomenon — exported to some 150 countries around the world — rested on her shoulders. There were so-called Pamela clauses in the licensing deals, with many of the international broadcasters interested in buying only the episodes in which she appeared. And yet she was never properly compensated. A C.J. Parker Barbie became a bestseller based on Anderson's likeness, but she reaped not a penny. She says she made just $1,500 an episode in the first season of the show, and while she reportedly earned $300,000 an episode near the end of her run, co-star David Hasselhoff, who was also a producer, was making more and had an ownership stake that proved to be lucrative once Amazon Prime licensed the remastered series for its library in 2019.

"The producers of 'Baywatch' made a fortune," she says. "I just didn't have the representation back then. Or the know-how. You don't realize when you're doing a TV show that it's going to be that popular, so you kind of sign your life away."

Her older son is less forgiving. "She was definitely being taken advantage of. And it still feels weird how there hasn't been some sort of discussion with Amazon or the 'Baywatch' producers to get her her fair share," says Brandon, who put

Dress: Stella McCartney

together the HarperCollins and Netflix deals. "It's funny how it works with Dave Chappelle with Netflix; he can somehow go back and get paid for a show that he didn't own anything of. And with the Amazon library deal, we didn't get a penny."

Adding insult to injury, the "Baywatch" movie producers made a paltry offer for her to cameo in the 2017 film. They called nonstop. "It was becoming really, really awful," she says. "They said they wanted me to do it as a favor. I said, 'I do favors for animals, not for Paramount.' There was just so much bullying to do it. They wanted me to do it for free, as an homage or something. I said, 'Come on, guys. I mean, really?'"

But she acquiesced and appears in a brief cameo in the film. No dialogue, just walking in slow motion. "I ended up OK," she says. "No complaints."

Still, Anderson paid the price for her "Baywatch" fame. After divorcing Lee in 1998, she was living alone in Malibu with her two young sons when she found a French teenager squatting in a rarely used room of her home, wearing her red "Baywatch" swimsuit. The girl was holding a letter that said, "I'm not a lesbian, but I dream of you." As the police arrived, the girl slit her wrists. She survived and was deported.

Anderson was shaken. "The police said, 'Well, you really weren't in that much danger because she was a girl,'" she says. "I was like, 'How does that make it less dangerous? Women can still murder people.' It's kind of been an interesting, reoccurring theme with me and women. My babysitter was female, and people would never assume that she was molesting me. It shouldn't make a difference. Everyone's capable of horrible things."

The stalker incident proved to be a turning point for Anderson. She began to retreat from the public eye with her sons. A self-described romantic, she continued to give marriage a go — some of the men being famous (Kid Rock in 2006) and some mere civilians (Vancouver Island local Dan Hayhurst in 2020). She married professional poker player Rick Salomon twice — once in 2007 and then again in 2014 — though only one of the marriages was legally binding.

And in a plot twist no one saw coming, she married Peters in 2020, right before the pandemic hit. It, too, didn't last. (Also unofficial, the union was over after just 12 days.) "He's great and has been a huge influence on my life. I love him to death," Anderson says now. Peters remains smitten. He tells *Variety*: "I will always love Pamela, always in my heart. As a matter of fact, I left her $10 million in my will. And she doesn't even know that. Nobody knows that. I'm just saying it for the first time with you. I probably shouldn't be saying it. So that's for her, whether she needs it or not."

> "They said they wanted me to do the movie as a favor. I said, 'I do favors for animals, not for Paramount.'"

This is how Anderson feels about "Pam & Tommy" catapulting her back into the zeitgeist: It distracted the world from her real accomplishments, such as starring as Roxy Hart in "Chicago" on Broadway right after the finale aired. "It was just shocking," she says of the series. "Tommy probably thought it was funny. I remember Tommy writing me a note saying, 'Don't let this hurt you like it did the first time,' because he had heard through the kids that I was kind of struggling with the idea of bringing this all up again. I don't think he was portrayed kindly. I just know that I refuse to watch it."

To calm herself down, she repeats a mantra she used to chant in the grocery store: "Hold your head high. Walk out the door. I know everybody's seen me having sex, but I'm just here to get some cereal for my kids. Just keep on going."

One source of comfort has always been her relationship with animals. The longtime PETA activist and vegan beams when she notes that she rescued 50 cats and 30 dogs following the Deepwater Horizon oil spill in 2010. Her rescue work has put her in the room with some powerful people, including high-ranking Russian politicians. She lobbied them to ban the import of seal products.

"I'd be at the Kremlin, sitting at the table, and everybody would be there. And I would be rustling my papers with my dolphin pictures and my beluga whales getting hypothermia and pleading across the table to these people that actually did things in real time," she says. "Putin was only in the room once, but he heard of everything. I would get messages from other people that he was pleased that I was there — he kind of got a kick out of me."

She stops talking because she's well aware of the fact that discussing anything Russia-related has become the third rail. "I don't know what the right thing is to say right now," she says, "because it's horrible." And she quickly notes that she voted for Biden in 2020. Her politics are simple: "Just keep supporting human beings."

Another unlikely friendship of Anderson's is with WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange. Anderson visited him on multiple occasions at the Ecuadorian Embassy in London, where he sought refuge. He's now facing extradition to the U.S. on 18 counts relating to WikiLeaks' release of U.S. military secrets, among other transgressions.

"It's just heartbreaking because he's in a supermax prison in solitary confinement while he's awaiting a trial, and all of these other people are breaking the law all over the place and no one's in jail," she says. "It's an interesting hypocrisy."

As for the question that many have wondered over the years — was the relationship strictly platonic or was there more? She describes one mezcal-filled night at the embassy as "frisky" but is otherwise vague.

"It was romantic because it was so inspirational," she says. "He's so passionate about life and about everything. There's just nothing that he says that isn't fascinating. So there was definitely a connection. We would just talk through the night and drink mezcal and laugh and tell stories."

Anderson is devastated that she can no longer see Assange. But she says a member of his legal team reads her letters to him behind bars.

These days, Anderson is comfortable not knowing her next step. She's talking to her friend Werner Herzog about doing a film called "Vernon God Little," based on DBC Pierre's Booker Prize-winning coming-of-age novel. But who knows?

In a few days, she'll travel back to Ladysmith. She's eager to reunite with her dogs and take walks on the beach in her Crocs. She can't get her HBO to work in Canada, so she's missed the new season of "White Lotus," but she'll get to it. She likes to binge on docs, like "Hallelujah: Leonard Cohen," about another Canadian icon. "It's been a year since I've been with anybody, and it's been the best year of my life," she says. "It's been every day writing and reading and just thinking about all the things that make me happy."

The fire is dying down. The breakfast plates sit empty. With that, Anderson shares one last epiphany: "No one can ever take *me* away from me. I'm always going to be OK. No matter what happens, I've proven that theory. I know that I can live with nothing. I know I can live with something. I can live in an apartment. I can live in a trailer. I can live in a mansion. I can live in a castle. I'm just OK right here where I'm at." ●

SUNDANCE FINDS ITS GROOVE AGAIN

By Zack Sharf

Photographs by Ryan Pfluger

→ Anticipation was high for the first in-person Sundance festival in three years, and the 2023 event delivered. From Jonathan Majors' jaw-dropping transformation into a bodybuilder to the sexy "Fair Play" landing a $20 million Netflix deal, there was no shortage of buzzy news. The headlines continued out of the Variety Sundance Studio, where the festival's biggest actors and directors gathered to dish on their premieres, tease new projects and break news. Given the star power on display, it's clear Sundance made a roaring comeback.

←

Jennifer Connelly

BAD BEHAVIOUR

Connelly didn't let her "Bad Behaviour" Sundance press tour stop the "Top Gun: Maverick" Oscar campaign. She champions Tom Cruise as "extraordinary" and says he "absolutely deserves" Oscar attention. "The work he did to accomplish those flying sequences, it's something else," she adds.

↑

Alexander Skarsgård

INFINITY POOL

Skarsgård had to join the bonkers "Infinity Pool" — this year's midnight movie — because the script baffled him. "It's rare for me to be surprised and confused when I read something," he told *Variety*. "How did the writer come up with this?"

→

Anne Hathaway

EILEEN

“It’s so exciting to have a movie that you just fall in love with,” Hathaway says of her romantic thriller. “When something comes down the line and feels like it understands you and was made just for you ... that’s how I felt watching this one.”

↑

Brooke Shields

PRETTY BABY: BROOKE SHIELDS

Shields’ documentary was one of Sundance’s most-talked-about premieres. The actor and supermodel just wishes her mom and former manager, Teri Shields, could’ve been here to see it. “You don’t ever recover from losing a parent,” Shields says. “She’s probably looking down saying, ‘I didn’t get enough screen time!’”

↓

Daisy Ridley

SOMETIMES I THINK ABOUT DYING

Ridley opened Sundance with “Sometimes I Think About Dying,” which was a “nerve-racking” experience for the “Star Wars” alum: “I knew we made a good movie, but it was strange. It’s like, ‘How are people going to receive this?’”

←

Michael J. Fox

STILL

Fox, who earned a standing ovation as the subject of “Still,” promises he’ll never let Parkinson’s disease ruin his sense of humor. “There’s no better alternative,” he says. “It’s better than being miserable.”

↑

Jonathan Majors

MAGAZINE DREAMS

How did Majors transform himself into a jacked bodybuilder? He consumed 6,100 calories every day for four months. “You’re eating six times a day,” he reveals. “Lots of chicken. Lots of elk. That’s just for me — I like it.”

↑

Mia Goth

INFINITY POOL

Goth hit Sundance to promote "Infinity Pool," but all anyone could talk about was her "I'm a star!" meltdown from "Pearl." "I knew it was an important moment," she says. "I didn't know how big it would be. I don't think through scenes in too much detail."

↓

Taylour Paige

MAGAZINE DREAMS

For Paige, the bodybuilding drama is not about bodybuilding at all. "It's not irrelevant, but it's symbolic," she says. The film's big takeaway: "If you're not loved from the inside out, then you're waiting for the world to love you from the outside in."

←

Gael García Bernal

CASSANDRO

Bernal earned raves for playing the first openly gay wrestler in Mexico's macho sport of lucha libre, but he didn't hire a wrestling coach to prep. "Cassandro would never have a coach for that," he says. "So I just ate a lot and did a lot of exercise."

→

Meagan Good

HARLEM

Good stepped into the director's chair for the second season of her Prime Video comedy series, "Harlem." "I love directing so much," she says. "Everyone got behind it. I especially love my episode because so many great things happen."

↑

Emilia Clarke

THE POD GENERATION

One of the fest's most viral revelations: "Game of Thrones" alum Clarke will not watch the prequel series "House of the Dragon." "I just can't do it," she says. "It's so weird. It's like, 'You want to go to this school reunion that's not your year?' I'm avoiding it."

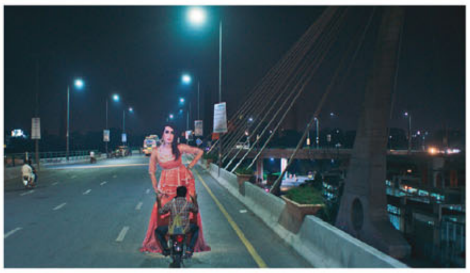
34TH ANNUAL
PALM SPRINGS INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL 2023

JANUARY 5-16
PSFILMFEST.ORG
THE COMPLETE LIST OF WINNERS

FIPRESCI: BEST INTERNATIONAL FILM
SAINT OMER
Directed by Alice Diop

FIPRESCI: BEST INTERNATIONAL SCREENPLAY
Carla Simón, Arnau Vilaró, ALCARRÀS
Directed by Carla Simón

FIPRESCI: BEST ACTRESS IN AN INTERNATIONAL FILM
Oksana Cherkashyna, KLONDIKE
Directed by Maryna Er Gorbach



FIPRESCI: BEST ACTOR IN AN INTERNATIONAL FILM
Ali Junejo, JOYLAND
Directed by Saim Sadiq

BEST DOCUMENTARY AWARD
TO KILL A TIGER
Directed by Nisha Pahuja

LOCAL JURY AWARD
LIQUOR STORE DREAMS
Directed by So Yun Um

NEW VOICES NEW VISIONS AWARD
THE DAMNED DON'T CRY
Directed by Fyzal Boulifa

MOZAIK BRIDGING THE BORDERS AWARD
DIRTY DIFFICULT DANGEROUS
Directed by Wissam Charaf

IBERO-AMERICAN AWARD
CHILE, '76
Directed by Manuela Martelli

YOUNG CINEASTES AWARD
RICEBOY SLEEPS
Directed by Anthony Shim

AUDIENCE AWARD: BEST FICTION FILM
ARGENTINA, 1985
Directed by Santiago Mitre

AUDIENCE AWARD: BEST DOCUMENTARY FILM
OF MEDICINE AND MIRACLES
Directed by Ross Kauffman

AWARDS CIRCUIT

Oscar Nominations

The Academy Awards voters have made their selections on the road to March 12 kudos, offering up expected noms plus surprises, giving observers a whole lot to debate.

Oscar Goes for the Popular Vote

Nominations tapped box office hits, festival favorites and some picks out of left field

● *By Jon Burlingame, Shalini Dore, Todd Gilchrist, Tim Gray, Carole Horst, Jenelle Riley and Malina Saval*

CUSTOMER PARKING ONLY
ALL UNAUTHORIZED
WILL BE TOWED
DRY THE EASY

↑ Jamie Lee Curtis and Michelle Yeoh earned noms for their work in "Everything Everywhere All at Once."

Allyson Riggs/A24

Oscar nominations were announced Jan. 24 with surprises, snubs and expected choices. The Academy Awards will be handed out March 12. Here, *Variety* breaks down the biggest categories.

● PICTURE

Oscar voters have come up with the most wide-ranging best pic lineup in decades, full of populist choices.

The 10 films nominated for Oscar's top prize represent a cross-section of blockbusters, specialty films, indies and mid-range Hollywood movies. There is also a healthy mix of long-established studios, streamers and specialty companies. There's one film not in the English language, one co-directed by an Asian American (and starring a mostly Asian American cast) and one by a woman.

The breadth of the list is a sharp contrast to most best picture slates of the past two decades.
Best picture nominations for the 95th annual Academy Awards also offer several distinctions, including two sequels nominated in one year, which is a first; and two contenders that are in the year's worldwide top 10 at the B.O., the first time that's happened since 2009.

The 10 Oscar noms for best picture are "All Quiet on the Western Front" (Netflix), "Avatar: The Way of Water" (Fox), "The Banshees of Inisherin" (Searchlight), "Elvis" (Warner Bros.), "Everything Everywhere All at Once" (A24), "The Fabelmans" (Universal), "Tár" (Focus), "Top Gun: Maverick" (Paramount); "Triangle of Sadness" (Neon) and "Women Talking" (United Artists).

The titles represent sci-fi/fantasy ("Avatar"), family dramedy ("Banshees," "Fabelmans"), cosmic family comedy ("Everything"), dark character study ("Tár"), big-scale military themes ("All Quiet," "Top Gun"), musical ("Elvis"), social satire ("Triangle of Sadness") and intimate drama ("Women Talking").

This list doesn't cover all the bases. There are no documentaries, animated movies, no films about disabilities, only one apiece

↑ Germany's "All Quiet on the Western Front" grabbed nine Oscar nominations.

← "Elvis" star Austin Butler is in the running for lead actor.

All Quiet on the Western Front: Reiner Bajo/Netflix; Elvis: Warner Bros. Pictures

from a person of color and a woman, and no films centering on Blacks or Latino/Hispanics.

But this year's roster is much more inclusive and varied than most best pic lineups in the 21st century, when low-budget specialty films easily dominated. For example, when the 2005 nominees were announced — "Brokeback Mountain," "Capote," "Crash," "Good Night, and Good Luck" and "Munich" — none of them had earned as much at the B.O. as a documentary contender ("March of the Penguins"). That was typical of many awards years.

In Oscar history, only six sequels have been previously been nominated for best picture. Two took the top prize: "The Godfather Part II" and "The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King." Past contenders for best picture were "The Bells of St. Mary's" (1945; the sequel to "Going My Way"), "The Godfather Part III" (1990), "Toy Story 3" (2010) and "The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers" (2002).

This year's lineup also reflects public tastes: The top two films at the year's B.O. were "Avatar: The Way of Water" and "Top Gun: Maverick," which earned a combined $3.5 billion worldwide. The strong showing for sequels is fitting: The worldwide top 10 for 2022 included only one film that was not a sequel (China's sci-fi comedy "Moon Man").

In Oscar's first 75 years, the top B.O. film at the global box office earned best pic wins 17 times, about one-fourth of the time. But this hasn't happened since "LOTR" in 2003. In the following decades, the best picture winner has wound up, on average, in the year's No. 47 slot.

Does 2022's populist list mean a sea-change with Oscar voters? Maybe, maybe not. Oscar pundits tend to analyze each year's nominations as if they indicate a seismic shift in the industry. But actually, Academy of Motion Picture Arts & Sciences voters always select the best of what's been offered that year. So things could see another major reversal in the next few years.

Even though there are no women directors nominated, the best picture prize in the past two years went to films directed by women: "Nomadland" and "CODA." In fact, only two films directed by a Caucasian male — "Spotlight" and "Green Book" — have won best picture since 2012. The others were helmed by a person of color or a woman.

● DIRECTOR

Outside of Ruben Östlund's left-field nom for the social satire "Triangle of Sadness," which also earned him an original screenplay nomination, there were no surprises in the directing category. Steven Spielberg earned his ninth career nomination for the semiautobiographical "The Fabelmans," for what may become his third win — that is, if a murderers' row of imminently worthy first-timers doesn't shut him out for directing a movie about how and why he became a director. Daniels Kwan and Scheinert earn their place (and then some) with one of the most ambitious films of the year, the multiverse-surfing odyssey "Everything Everywhere All at Once," but then again, so can Todd Field, who applied the same meticulousness, precision and emotional sweep to "Tár" that his flawed protagonist did to her conducting. By comparison, capturing the chilly, pastoral beauty of an Irish island might seem like a point-and-shoot situation for Martin McDonagh, but paired with his also-nominated original screenplay, he navigates the tumultuous emotional landscape of "The Banshees of Inisherin" with depth, nuance and dexterity.

● LEAD ACTOR

All five actors in the category are first-time Oscar nominees, such as newer faces including Austin Butler, who channeled the King in Baz Luhrmann's "Elvis," and Paul Mescal, who played a father on vacation with his daughter in "Aftersun." But there are also some veterans among the lineup, such as Bill Nighy, who stars as a man who learns he's dying in "Living." And there's comeback kid Brendan Fraser, who plays a morbidly obese professor looking to reconnect with his daughter in "The Whale." And while he's turned in several acclaimed performances, this is actually Colin Farrell's first nomination, playing the dumped friend who can't let go in "The Banshees of Inisherin." Butler and Farrell both won Golden Globes for their work, while Fraser took home the Critics Choice Award. All five have received BAFTA nominations and all but Mescal landed SAG Awards nominations.

● LEAD ACTRESS

All season, the actress category has been the most competitive, and it was a given that some deserving names would be omitted. But it was still shocking to see Viola Davis, who didn't miss a single precursor nom all season, missing here. The three others who showed up in BAFTA, SAG, Golden Globes and Critics' Choice all made the cut: Cate Blanchett for her stunning turn as a conductor in "Tár," Michelle Yeoh for hopping multiverses in "Everything Everywhere All at Once" and Ana de Armas for her turn as Marilyn Monroe in "Blonde." Though she missed at SAG and there was much discussion about if she would have fared better in supporting, Michelle Williams snagged a spot for her role as the loving but unique mother in "The Fabelmans." The fifth slot went to Andrea Riseborough, whose turn as an addict in "To Leslie" benefitted from a grassroots campaign that included such supporters as Kate Winslet and Gwyneth Paltrow spreading the word.

● SUPPORTING ACTOR

Four of the five nominees are first-timers and the fifth, Judd Hirsch, was last nominated in this same category in 1981. That was for "Ordinary People," but now Hirsch is back in the race for his singular scene as the granduncle who teaches young Sammy Fabelman about art and life in "The Fabelmans." Also nominated is the current circuit champion Ke Huy Quan for his role — or roles — in "Everything Everywhere All at Once." Quan has already landed wins from Gotham, Golden Globes and Critics' Choice Awards, with BAFTA and SAG Awards nominations pending. "The Banshees of Inisherin" co-stars Brendan Gleeson and Barry Keoghan have also been regulars on the circuit, landing all the precursor nominations for their very different roles as two inhabitants of the same small Irish island in Martin McDonagh's latest. The fifth nominee is Brian Tyree Henry, who garnered noms from Gotham, Spirit and Critics Choice for his turn as a grief-stricken mechanic in "Causeway."

↓ Colin Farrell took a lead actor nom for "The Banshees of Inisherin."

Jonathan Hession/Searchlight Pictures

● SUPPORTING ACTRESS

The only category that matched perfectly with the SAG Award nominations, supporting actress is a powerhouse lineup. Angela Bassett, who already has Critics Choice and Golden Globe wins for reprising the role as the Sovereign Queen Mother of Wakanda in "Black Panther: Wakanda Forever," made history as the first person to land an acting nomination for a Marvel movie. She is also the only returning Oscar nominee, as the other four are all first-timers to the race. Kerry Condon joined three of her nominated co-stars in the Oscar race for "The Banshees of Inisherin," playing Colin Farrell's reasonable sister. Hong Chau earned a nom for her role as a sympathetic friend and nurse to Brendan Fraser's character in "The Whale," capping off a great year that also included a turn in "The Menu." And "Everything Everywhere All at Once" co-stars Jamie Lee Curtis and Stephanie Hsu both made the cut for their multiple roles in the mind-bending crowd-pleaser.

● INTL. FILM

Despite an international shortlist filled with diverse nominees from Asia, Africa and Latin America, European titles dominated the final five with only "Argentina, 1985" coming from South America. Germany's "All Quiet on the Western Front" led the Euro contingent, drawing noms not only in this race but also for best picture, adapted screenplay and a slew of artisan categories. The other three international nominees are Belgium's "Close," Poland's "EO" and Ireland's first nomination in this category, "The Quiet Girl." This is a highly competitive category, with "All Quiet on the Western Front" asserting itself not only in the Oscar race (nine noms) but also in the BAFTA nominations, while "Argentina, 1985" won the Golden Globe. Festivals played a strong role in launching the nominated field: Belgium's "Close" and Poland's "EO" have garnered strong support since their Cannes premieres, while "Quiet Girl" debuted at the Berlinale, "Argentina, 1985" bowed at Venice and "All Quiet on the Western Front" at Toronto.

● ANIMATED FEATURE

The animated feature category offered a couple of surprises in its strong lineup: Netflix's "Sea Beast" earning a nomination after being relatively under the radar, and Netflix nabbing two nominations out of five in this category, while the usual juggernaut Disney/Pixar took just one. "Sea Beast," the gorgeously animated and rollicking tale of tolerance and acceptance, is directed by Oscar-winner Chris Williams, earning his third nom here. The stop-motion renaissance continues as Netflix's Golden Globe-winner "Guillermo del Toro's Pinocchio," from Guillermo del Toro and Mark Gustafson, and A24's "Marcel the Shell With Shoes On," from Dean Fleischer Camp, scored expected nominations. DreamWorks Animation's "Puss in Boots: The Last Wish," from Joel Crawford, triumphantly balanced a mature story with kid-friendly elements and cutting-edge animation, and could give presumed front-runner "Pinocchio" a run for its money, while Oscar-winner Domee Shi's "Turning Red" shouldn't be counted out — its story of female puberty and family expectations is refreshing and quite hilarious too.

● ORIGINAL SCREENPLAY

Character-driven movies taking a probing look at the human experience and its myriad challenges comprise this year's original screenplay nominations. This is, without exception, a strong category. Martin McDonagh's "The Banshees of Inisherin," with its BAFTA screenplay nom and nine Oscar nominations, has had a vigorously enthusiastic critical response. With its tragicomic exploration of a friendship torn asunder, and the ensuing pain and loss, it's a script that resonates with audiences and awards voters. Likewise, "Everything Everywhere All at Once," written by Daniel Kwan and Daniel

↑
Paul Mescal is a new face in the Academy lead actor race for "Aftersun."

←
Brian Tyree Henry earned a supporting actor nomination for "Causeway."

Aftersun: A24; Causeway: AppleTV+

Scheinert, and "The Fabelmans," written by Steven Spielberg and Tony Kushner, explore the family structure and how the interpersonal relationships between parents and children can serve to both inspire and, at times, create traumatic situations from which a character must extricate oneself in order to grow and find happiness. "Fabelmans" and "Everything" have also scored BAFTA noms in the screenplay category, giving both an edge in the Oscar race. Todd Field's "Tár" and Ruben Östlund's "Triangle of Sadness," which also scored BAFTA noms, are two films in which dialogue and character development reign supreme.

● ADAPTED SCREENPLAY

The brutality of war, the quiet hell of female oppression, human mortality and a box office smash with Tom Cruise and fighter jets. If this year's adapted screenplay category proves anything, it's that the Academy voters want a compelling, solid story — no matter the genre. "Women Talking," adapted from Miriam Toews' novel by Sarah Polley, has bowled over critics from the beginning, capturing how women feel and think and, well, talk, in a way that so few films do. "Living" is another quietly devastating film, written by celebrated British scribe Kazuo Ishiguro, honored with his first Oscar nom. Conversely, "Top Gun: Maverick," with a screenplay by Ehren Kruger and Eric Warren Singer and Christopher McQuarrie, and story by Peter Craig and Justin Marks, is a script that captivates through its action sequences, reviving beloved characters from the "Top Gun" franchise. In a similar vein, "All Quiet on the Western Front," penned by Edward Berger, Lesley Paterson and Ian Stokell, is a movie whose war-torn visuals leave an indelible mark, earning 14 BAFTA noms, including screenplay, in addition to its nine Oscar noms. Rian Johnson's "Glass Onion: A Knives Out Mystery," with its sole nom in the screenplay category, is a lighter whodunnit contender, but with a script that has, across the board, enchanted voters from the Austin Film Critics Assn. to the African-American Film Critics Assn.

● ORIGINAL SONG/SCORE

Never count out Diane Warren, who is in the running for original song with "Applause" from "Tell It Like a Woman." This is her 14th nomination, with no wins, but she did receive an Honorary Oscar earlier this year. Superstars Lady Gaga ("Hold My Hand" from "Top Gun: Maverick") and Rihanna ("Lift Me Up" from "Black Panther: Wakanda Forever") scored the expected nominations as did Golden Globe winner "Naatu Naatu" from "RRR," with music by M.M. Keeravani and lyrics by Chandrabose. "This Is a Life" from "Everything Everywhere All at Once" (music by Ryan Lott, David Byrne and Mitski; lyric by Ryan Lott and David Byrne) rounded out the category. For score, the music branch kept it all male. Son Lux's nomination for "Everything Everywhere All at Once" is especially interesting as the branch rarely nominates films with more than one composer. In this case, the experimental band (Ryan Lott, Rafiq Bhatia, Ian Chang) was cited for its nearly wall-to-wall music for the multiverse comedy-drama. With his nomination for "The Fabelmans," John Williams, scoring his 29th film over the past 50 years for director Steven Spielberg, retains his record as the most-nominated composer and most-nominated living person. Justin Hurwitz ("Babylon"), Carter Burwell ("The Banshees of Inisherin") and Volker Bertelmann ("All Quiet on the Western Front") finish off the category.

● ARTISANS ROUNDUP

"All Quiet on the Western Front" dominated the craft categories, with nominations in VFX, cinematography, sound, makeup and hairstyling and production design. Ruth E. Carter has a shot at her second Oscar win with "Black Panther: Wakanda Forever" — she made history with her win for "Black Panther." Mandy Walker is only the third female DP to be nominated for an Oscar, and a win for her work on "Elvis" would be a milestone. Catherine Martin could win at least two Oscars for her costume design and production design on "Elvis." The sound category may be one of the most innovative, with "Top Gun: Maverick," "Avatar: The Way of Water," "All Quiet on the Western Front," "Elvis" and "The Batman" all pushing boundaries.

Cate Blanchett Leads Aussie Brigade at the Oscars

'Elvis,' other contenders also fly high with creatives from Down Under ● *By Brent Simon*

The land down under has long served as a pipeline for big-screen talent in Hollywood productions. In 2022, Australian-born creatives turned in some indelible work, resulting in an especially rich slate of Australian Oscar contenders in 2023.

Cate Blanchett leads this field by a considerable margin for her performance as the title character in Todd Field's "Tár." In the film, she plays a renowned conductor who experiences a uniquely contemporary crisis when patterns of questionable behavior get exposed at the height of her fame.

Already a two-time Academy Award winner for "The Aviator" and "Blue Jasmine," Blanchett recently picked up additional momentum with Golden Globe and Critics Choice Assn. victories. Her Oscar nomination for "Tár" marks the eighth of her career, and her first since 2016's lead actress nom for "Carol."

Fittingly, though — and further highlighting the intertwined relationship between the two countries — the biggest Australian Oscar player is "Elvis," Baz Luhrmann's rollicking, one-of-a-kind epic about the king of American rock 'n' roll, Elvis Presley. Filmed in Australia, "Elvis" earned eight Oscar nominations, including best picture, actor, cinematography, editing, makeup, sound, costume design and production design, coming on the heels of its whopping 15 nominations (and 11 wins, not including an audience prize) at the 12th annual Australian Academy of Cinema and Television Arts (AACTA) Awards in December.

At the center of the film's Academy Awards appeal is (American) Austin Butler, whose transformative performance as Elvis Presley has enjoyed a late surge, culminating in Butler being named actor of the year by the London Film Critics Circle, and subsequently winning a Golden Globe. Oscar voters have historically responded favorably to both biopics and breakthrough turns

↓ Cate Blanchett earned her eighth Oscar nom as Lydia Tár in "Tár."

Focus Features

from young talent, and "Elvis" checks both those boxes.

The pic does show off the ingenuity of the entire crew and versatility of Australian locations, as it re-created American iconic locations Down Under.

A best picture win would mean recognition as producers for Luhrmann, Catherine Martin, Gail Berman, Patrick McCormick and Schuyler Weiss. Though Luhrmann wasn't recognized for directing or co-screenwriting, "Elvis" seems particularly poised to clean up in categories spotlighting its hyperkinetic look and feel, and innovative use of sound.

"Elvis" editors Matt Villa (Australian) and Jonathan Redmond (Irish but based in New York and worked in Sydney for this film) were nominated for editing, while Martin, Luhrmann's wife and longtime creative collaborator, was nominated for costume design, as well as for production design, alongside Karen Murphy and Bev Dunn. Mark Coulier, Jason Baird and Aldo Signoretti were recognized as hair and makeup nominees, while David Lee, Wayne Pashley, Andy Nelson and Michael Keller scored a sound nomination.

With her nom, AACTA honoree Mandy Walker became only the third female nominated for an Academy Award for cinematography, following in the footsteps of "Mudbound's" Rachel Morrison and fellow Aussie Ari Wegner for "The Power of the Dog."

Meanwhile, though she didn't garner an Oscar nom, Australian native Olivia DeJonge received the AACTA supporting actress award for her turn as Priscilla Presley.

For her work as aspiring actor Nellie LaRoy in Damien Chazelle's colorful early-Hollywood epic "Babylon," Margot Robbie earned Golden Globe and Critics Choice lead actress nominations, along with a performance by a cast Screen Actors Guild nom, honoring Robbie's status as the undeniable emotional engine of a movie celebrating cinematic creativity (in addition to industry excess).

"The Son" may have received somewhat mixed critical reaction out of Venice, but Hugh Jackman is a beloved performer, and Florian Zeller's heartstring-pulling drama is full of the type of big, emotive moments that helped the Australian native net a Golden Globe nom for the movie, but he missed what would have been his second lead actor Oscar nomination (his first was for 2012's "Les Misérables").

The debate over how to properly celebrate the work of actors using performance-capture technology remains unsettled, years removed from Andy Serkis' stirring turn as Caesar in the "Planet of the Apes" trilogy.

The debate gets revived every couple of years as Josh Brolin fans made a case for him as Thanos in "Avengers: Infinity War." Australian star and performance capture vet Sam Worthington was not recognized for his turn as soldier-turned-Na'vi leader Jake Sully, but betting against James Cameron consistently seems like a losing proposition.

As the film closes in on $2 billion in box office revenue, its previously announced sequels offer further opportunities for awards recognition for its actors. A lead actor nomination for Worthington's complex motion-capture performance would not only break ground but provide the Academy with a fresh narrative in the years to come.

Though Australians did not figure as prominently as expected in nominations on the technical side, Jake Morrison earned positive reviews for coordinating Chris Hemsworth and Natalie Portman's super-heroics in Taika Waititi's scrappy "Thor: Love and Thunder," while Roy Malhi unbottled his creativity for George Miller's djinn story, "Three Thousand Years of Longing." And as "Thirteen Lives" maintained its underdog status throughout the season, VFX supervisor Jason Billington proved an imminently worthy candidate for his seamless work in Ron Howard's depiction of the 2018 Tham Luang cave rescue.

→
"Thirteen Lives," starring Viggo Mortensen, was shot in Australia.

Vince Valitutti/Metro Goldwyn Mayer Pictures

FILM, TV PRODUCTION RAMPS UP DOWN UNDER

The production landscape can often seem a zero-sum game, with cost-conscious studios looking to maximize their budget dollars by any means necessary. But Australia, with its combination of solid infrastructure, attractive financial packaging and abundant natural beauty, is enjoying a boom.

Key to this upswing has been a diversified portfolio that courts international mega-productions — that includes the currently lensing "Kingdom of the Planet of the Apes," directed by "The Maze Runner"'s Wes Ball — as well as recurring television series, such as "La Brea" and "Young Rock."

"The benefits of working with our highly skilled crew, creative talent, world-class post-production, VFX, facilities and screen-service businesses are widely recognized, and driving record levels of film and television production activity across the country," Ausfilm CEO Kate Marks tells *Variety*. "With the support of Australia's competitive incentive programs, we are welcoming back our production partners time and again for both physical productions as well as post, digital and VFX work, testament to the strength and reputation of our local industry."

The Walt Disney Co., NBCUniversal, Netflix and Amazon Studios have all recently made big investments in Australian production facilities, further building out the industry's post-production, digital effects and animation realms.

A recent Screen Australia report showed that film production expenditure in the country reached almost $2.3 billion this past year, a new record. Of that total, however, more than $1.5 billion is slated for local productions that will help fill the burgeoning content demand of streaming platforms — scripted dramas including Disney+'s "The Clearing," starring Teresa Palmer, Miranda Otto and Guy Pearce; HBO Max's "The Tourist," starring Jamie Dornan and Danielle Macdonald; and "Metropolis," an eight-part adaptation of Fritz Lang's sci-fi classic from "Mr. Robot" creator Sam Esmail for Apple+; and for Amazon Studios, "The Lost Flowers of Alice Hart," an adaptation of Australian author Holly Ringland's novel of the same name.

—Brent Simon

UNIVERSAL MUSIC GROUP
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JONAS BROTHERS

ON THEIR HOLLYWOOD
WALK OF FAME STAR

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Jonas Brothers Are Ready to Turn It Up Again

Trio went from from teen stardom to comebacks to a Walk of Fame star • *By Mike Wass*

→
"So often, people have their business life separate from their family life, but we get to share it all," says Nick Jonas, right, of being honored alongside brothers Kevin, left, and Joe.

Gizelle Hernandez/Netflix

↑ "It was scary, but also exciting," says Joe, center, of the band's breakout.

Jessica Sheldon

The Jonas Brothers' legacy will be cemented, quite literally, on Jan. 30 when the band is honored with a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame — an accolade that feels both too soon and long overdue. Barely in their 30s, the band members are very much in their prime and the trio continues to have a vice-like grip on pop radio — with a much-anticipated new album on the horizon. On the other hand, the siblings have been doing this for 18 years, leaving an indelible mark on entertainment in the process.

It took a while for the enormity of the news to sink in. "At first, it was shock," Nick Jonas says of his reaction to the band earning real estate on the Walk of Fame. "We got on FaceTime with the whole family and tried to digest it."

As with all the awards the Jonas Brothers have received along the way, this means more because it's a communal experience. "So often, people have their business life separate from their family life, but we get to share it all."

Joe was similarly moved. "We just felt so honored," he says. "Some of us were in tears, we just couldn't believe it." When asked about them attaining the honor at a comparatively early stage of their careers, Joe doesn't miss a beat. "I hope it doesn't mean anything bad," he jokes. "Maybe we'll set a trend of more young people getting a star."

As for now, he's only concerned about one thing: "I hope we have good neighbors."

It's another remarkable milestone in a decades-long journey that somehow felt ordained from the very beginning. Raised in Wyckoff, N.J., by musical parents, the brothers were already proficient at multiple instruments before fate intervened and Nick was discovered at a barber shop. (According to legend, he was overheard singing while getting a trim.) Before long, he was working on a solo album, 2005's "Nicholas Jonas."

"I was originally signed as a solo artist by David Massey at Columbia Records," Nick recalls. (Massey currently runs Arista Records.) He roped in brothers Joe and Kevin to help write songs for the project and they came up with "Please Be Mine," a dreamy pop-rock ballad that showcased their honey-dipped harmonies. "It was the first song we wrote together," Nick continues. "Massey heard the song and recognized that it was special, eventually he signed us as a group."

The Jonas Brothers look back on the making of their debut album, 2006's "It's About Time," with fondness and a degree of incredulity. Kevin remembers "driving into the city every single day and going to writing sessions with different writers and producers" while also juggling school and homework. "It was a weird time because we were all living double lives," he adds.

Initially, friends didn't know what to make of their musical aspirations. "No one really knew what we were doing," Kevin laughs. "I told people, 'We're in a band, we're going to make an album,' and they were like, 'Of course you are.'"

While the group has some misgivings about the finished album ("cool for the time" is the oldest Jonas' assessment), recording it was a rewarding process. "We learned a lot about songwriting," Kevin says. "The good and the bad."

Released with minimal fanfare, "It's About Time" contained two songs from Nick's solo debut

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“I never really thought the band would ever be a thing that wasn't.” —Kevin Jonas

(“Time for Me to Fly” and “Please Be Mine”), two covers of hits from ’00s U.K. boy band Busted, and an interpretation of LFO’s “6 Minutes.” Their innate musicality and growing musicianship were better showcased at live shows. Starting in 2005, the Jonas Brothers opened for everyone from the Veronicas to Kelly Clarkson and the Backstreet Boys.

“It was hard for us to comprehend the scale of the shows,” Nick recalls. “We had been performing at clubs to 200 or 300 people.” Rocking out in front of tens of thousands of fans galvanized them. “We wanted to get to that level ourselves,” he says, “but we had so much more work to do.”

Kevin’s assessment is more blunt. “We had no right being on that stage at the time,” he says. Amused, Nick chimes in: “Mistakes were made along the way.”

While “It’s About Time” cracked the Billboard 200 and introduced the Jonas Brothers to teens via syncs and appearances on Nickelodeon and the Disney Channel, Columbia Records cut the band loose. They soon signed with Disney’s in-house label, Hollywood Records, which released the band’s eponymous sophomore album in 2007. It would be their launching pad to superstardom, but they went into the studio in debt and with something to prove.

“We made that album in the basement of the house we were living in in New Jersey,” Nick remembers. “A family friend let us stay there essentially for free because we were so far in debt from self-funding our career and not having much success.”

With their dreams on the line, they backed their own talent. “The self-titled album was really born out of a need to show the world what we were capable of,” Nick adds. “It was really a defining moment.”

With the mighty Mouse in their corner and near constant coverage on the Disney Channel, the Jonas Brothers exploded in a way that few acts have before or since. The album delivered a steady stream of hit singles — “Year 3000,” “Hold On,” “SOS” and “When You Look Me in the Eyes” — and went on to sell more than 2.4 million copies in the United States. JoBros mania was alive and well, not that they were particularly aware of the adoration at first.

“It was moving so fast that we were always just focusing on the next thing,” Kevin says. “Every day was so busy that it didn’t really sink in, we just kept moving forward so quickly.” However, his memories are overwhelmingly good: “We were just on the ride and ready to go to work every day.”

Joe’s experience was similarly positive, but he remembers the attention occasionally getting out of hand. “We had a meet and greet in South America and we were unprepared for the amount of people that showed up,” he recalls. “We were literally running through a mall, being chased and then when we got into a minivan, we had to duck to hide.” At that point, the siblings knew that something had shifted in their lives forever. “It was different,” Joe says. “This was definitely something that we were not used to, something I had never seen before.”

When asked if the attention was ever overwhelming, Joe pauses to consider. “It was scary, but also exciting,” he says. “We were doing what we loved on such an extreme level and enjoying the ride.” It was also easier because they had each other. “We were able to find our own joy in the craziness. Whether it was just staying up till 4 or 5 in the morning, watching movies, playing video games and eating pizza — that was our after-party because we were so young.”

They were also able to lean on each other when times got tough. “When you do need a day off, but you don’t have one, we were able to be there for each other,” Joe says. That camaraderie also emboldened the brothers to try new things, including acting. The Jonas Brothers starred in seminal Disney musical “Camp Rock” in 2008 alongside Demi Lovato and contributed songs to the soundtrack. An instant hit, the musical was watched by 8.9 million people on the night of its premiere.

“Camp Rock” has since become a classic with scenes going viral on social media every other week. “You don’t think about the impact an album or a film can

→
The 2008 Disney movie “Camp Rock” starred the Jonases (from left: Nick, Joe and Kevin) and Demi Lovato.

Bob D’Amico/Disney Channel

JOE
KEVIN
NICK

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have on a younger audience," Nick says, "but you carry that into your adult years and it becomes even more meaningful." While other child stars have distanced themselves from earlier projects (Miley Cyrus famously buried Hannah Montana), the Jonas Brothers understand the power of nostalgia.

"We're really proud that the movie means more to our adult fans now than it did back when they were kids," Nick continues. "It's a really good example of how Disney could do no wrong at the time." That isn't to say that it has escaped the ravages of time entirely. "I don't want to say that the movie is bad by any means, but when you watch the clips that are viral now on TikTok … some of the lines are really questionable."

The band's third album, "A Little Bit Longer," dropped shortly after "Camp Rock" and debuted at No. 1 on the Billboard 200. The hits — "Burnin' Up" and "Tonight" — kept on coming and they broke new ground for Disney stars by earning a Grammy nomination for new artist, a Rolling Stone cover and performance on "Saturday Night Live." "We were really digging into the creative process, and we were proud of what we were making," Nick says. "Anytime you're recognized by your peers in any sense, it's a really gratifying thing."

The recognition did have a downside. "It led us to overthink a lot of things along the way," Nick says. He's referring to the band's ill-fated, at least in comparison to their previous Disney offerings, fourth album, "Lines, Vines, and Trying Times." As the emo title suggests, the band lost sight of its euphoric pop-rock roots and started chasing credibility in a way that occasionally worked, but just as often did not.

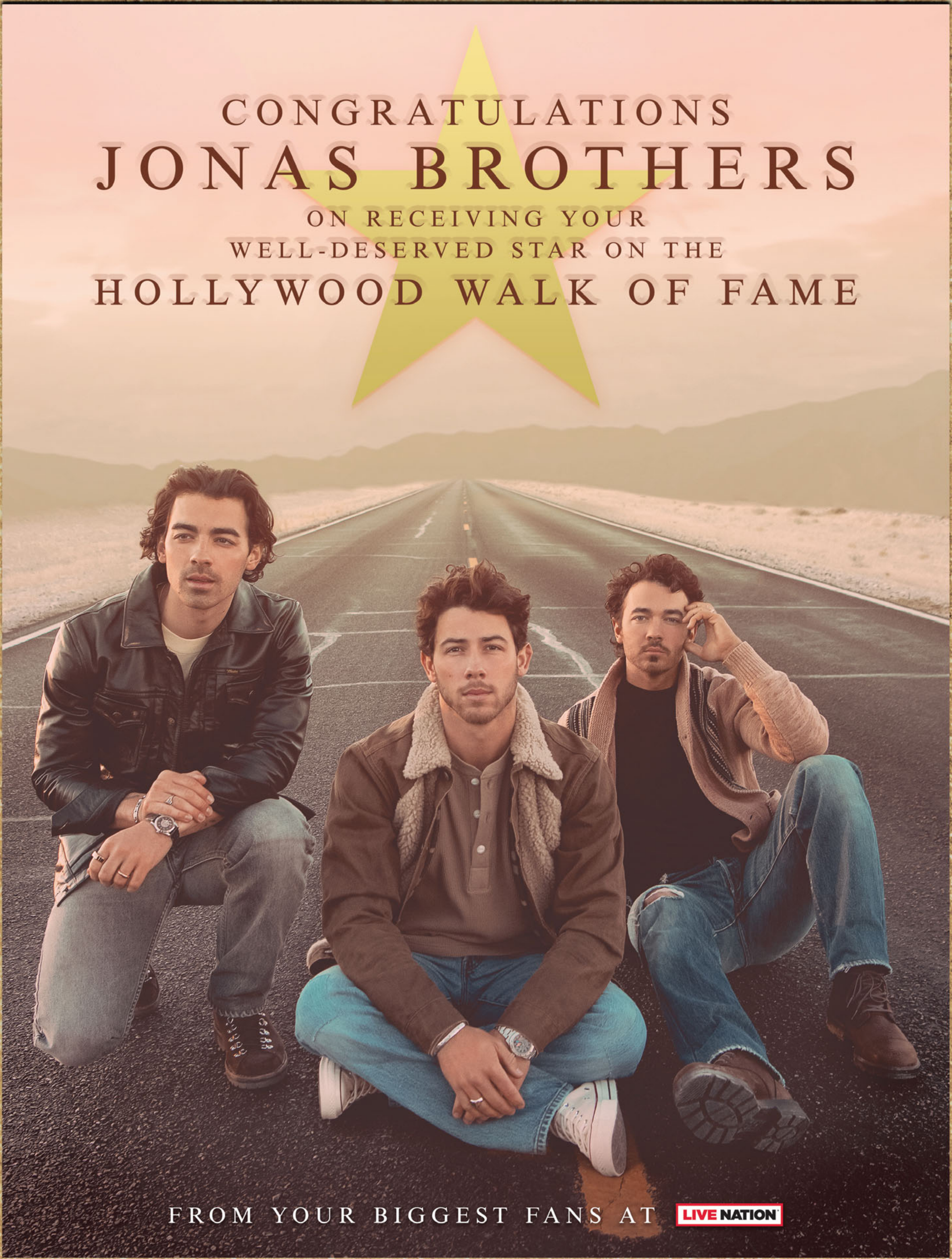
"We were actually starting to live very separate lives, really starting to grow up," Kevin says matter-of-factly. "You can hear that in the album. We had different ideas about genres and direction: it's not that it wasn't focused, it just wasn't as cohesive as other things we had done in the past." Ultimately, he thinks it's an accurate snapshot of where the band was at the time. "We were all over the place," Kevin admits. "We need to discover our individualities outside of the group."

> **"**
>
> **We were really digging into the creative process, and we were proud of what we were making."**
> **—Nick Jonas**

ALL BY YOURSELF
GOTTA CATCH
MY BREATH

↓ **A solo album by Nick, left, Joe's sidegroup DNCE and an E! reality show featuring Kevin, center, kept the brothers busy during the band's break.**

Cynthia Parkhurst



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HOLLYWOOD WALK OF FAME

FROM YOUR BIGGEST FANS AT LIVE NATION

A slew of solo projects followed. Nick Jonas and the Administration came and went, while Joe’s solo debut “Fastlife” dropped in 2011. A fifth Jonas Brothers album was planned for 2013 and singles “Pom Poms” and “First Time” were dutifully rolled out along with a potential title (“V”), but the band shocked fans by pulling the plug on the project and breaking up. Despite knowing it was coming, Kevin’s initial reaction was utter disbelief.

“I never really thought the band would ever be a thing that wasn’t,” he says emotionally. “I never wrapped my head around the idea that it wasn’t going to be, but I think that that’s actually part of the problem — you just become delusional in the sense of thinking that this thing is forever.”

Joe had mixed emotions. “I came to terms with it,” he says quietly, “but it was definitely a lot of frustration and sadness and mourning of something that you’ve done for so long.”

Nick’s approach was more pragmatic. “There was a lot going on in our lives,” he says. “We started insulating and only working with certain people instead of branching out and being more free creatively.” That was reflected in the music they were making: “It was not stuff that we were particularly thrilled with.” Ultimately, they put family over career. “Being family was more important than trying to jam Jonas Brothers into all of our lives,” Nick adds.

Joe points to one regret: the televised breakup announcement on “Good Morning America.” “It felt inauthentic, especially to our fans, who were so great to us for so many years,” he says, “but we were trying to be as honest as we could with them.”

It didn’t take long for Nick to launch a solo career, while Joe landed hits with dance-pop collective DNCE. Perhaps counterintuitively, the success of those endeavors stoked the flames for new Jonas Brothers material. “That period was the foundation for our return,” Nick says. “We found ourselves again, there’s no effective unit unless the parts are strong on their own.”

↑ “Being family was more important than trying to jam Jonas Brothers into all of our lives,” says Nick, seen with wife Priyanka Chopra, above left; Joe is married to Sophie Turner, center; and Kevin to Danielle Jonas (née Deleasa).

The Jonases started contemplating a reunion in 2018, initially for a series of live shows that would encompass previously released music. The more time they spent together, the more they wanted to record new material. They just needed the right architect for their comeback and found it in Ryan Tedder, who’s written hit songs for Adele, Beyoncé and his own band, OneRepublic.

“Ryan raised his hand right away,” Nick recalls. “He described it to us and our record label like this: ‘Jonas Brothers have a giant sleeping army basically ready to go.’ And thankfully he was right.”

It was actually something of an understatement. Comeback single “Sucker” debuted at No. 1 on the Billboard Hot 100, giving the band the biggest hit of its career. “It really set the template for the rest of the album,” Nick continues. “We wanted to bring happiness back into people’s lives and share the joy that we felt by reconnecting with each other.”

Reuniting wasn’t without risk, however. As Nick explains: “Being totally transparent, it was really scary stepping out and taking as big a swing as we took. And to see people show up in the way they did that year was really incredible.”

They named the album “Happiness Begins,” which resonated with the band. “We missed out on a lot because everything was moving so fast,” Kevin says. “We wanted to enjoy the moment this time. It really turned it into one big family reunion.”

Originally, Jonas Brothers planned their next full-length for 2020. They dropped a series of singles including “What a Man Gotta Do,” “Five More Minutes” and “X” featuring Karol G. “We have an amazing group of songwriters who also happen to be friends,” Nick says. “We took a week and just wrote a bunch of songs. We never want to be off-cycle as far as making music.”

But then COVID hit and, as with many projects due in 2020, the album was placed on hold. “We had shows in Vegas lined up in 2020 too,” Nick continues. “We had plans to get back in the studio, but I think it all worked out how it was supposed to. It pro-

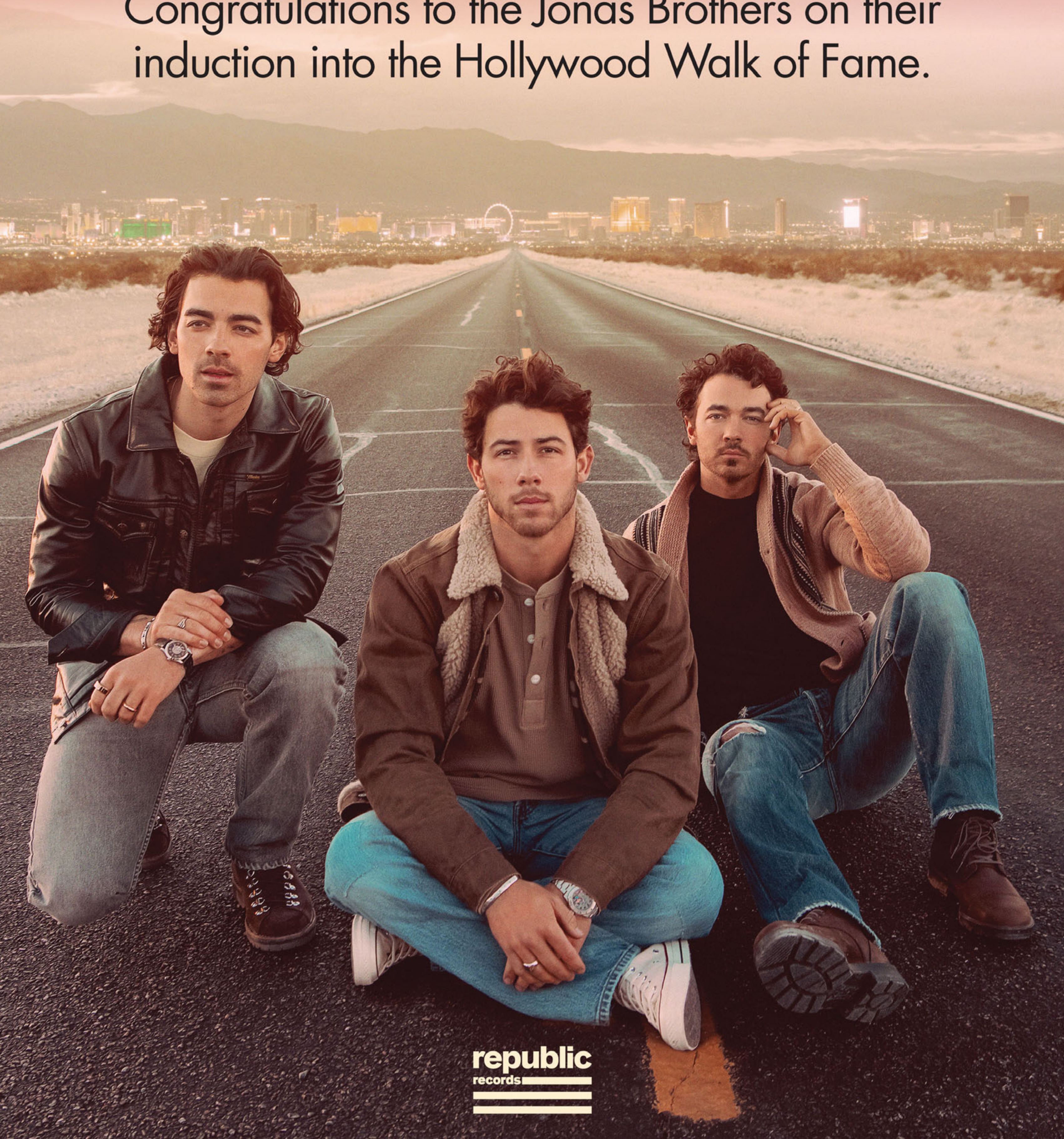
GLOBAL CITIZEN FESTIVAL

→ “We wanted to … share the joy that we felt by reconnecting,” says Nick, right, of the reunion with Kevin, center, and Joe in 2018.

(Top Row) Gizelle Hernandez/Netflix (3) (Bottom) Cynthia Parkhurst

THE ROAD TO STARDOM

Congratulations to the Jonas Brothers on their induction into the Hollywood Walk of Fame.



republic records

vided more time for us to zone in on exactly what we wanted to say with this body of work and what felt like the right musical tone."

In much the same way that Tedder captained the ship on "Happiness Begins," artist-producer Jon Bellion took the reins for their upcoming sixth album. "In a lot of ways, he has become another brother on this album given what he brought to the table musically and creatively," Nick says.

The unplanned hiatus also gave the band a chance to grow as people with weddings, children and side-projects such as Nick's Villa One tequila. That maturity is reflected on the new record. Says Joe: "The direction of the lyrics, the stories we're telling. ... It has changed a lot." And there's another important consideration. "I think about the fact that our kids will listen to this music," he adds.

Wide-reaching appeal is also important for fans, who regularly turn up to shows with their parents and offspring. "There are so many different generations," Nick says. "How do we make an album that speaks to all those different walks of life and ages?" Producer Bellion seems to have solved the puzzle. "The key to Jon's initial pitch was bringing in influences from the '70s, but with a really modern edge to it. We wanted to find a way to tell stories that are universal but also ultra-personal."

With the '70s looming large over the project, it's unsurprising to hear nods to another uber-successful sibling trio: the Bee Gees. "They were a huge influence in our lives, growing up and listening to them with our father," Kevin says enthusiastically. "And obviously, as we grew up being three brothers in a band, we definitely understood similarities."

With their Walk of Fame star being polished at this very moment, the band can't help but ponder their legacy. When asked what they want theirs to be, there is a moment of silence. "That's a difficult question to answer," Joe says. "Music makes you feel things and I hope we're able to get people through different emotions, different milestones, different breakups, heartaches and healing. Ultimately, I hope that we make people feel good and be a part of their lives like they have been a part of ours."

TIPSHEET

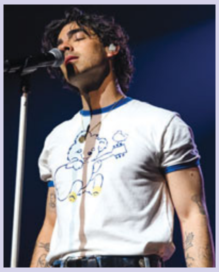
WHAT: Jonas Brothers receive a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame.
WHEN: 11:30 a.m. Jan. 30
WHERE: 7060 Hollywood Blvd.
WEB: walkoffame.com

↓ **"I think about the fact that our kids will listen to this music," says Joe Jonas, center, of the band's forthcoming album.**

A Great Divide

Nick, Joe and Kevin Jonas pick their favorite tracks from the band's forthcoming album

The Jonas Brothers' forthcoming sixth album features elements of classic '70s pop and Americana with a contemporary twist. But while Nick, Joe and Kevin all came together musically in the studio — with the guidance of producer Jon Bellion — they're divided on which song is their favorite.



Joe: "'Wings.' It might be the shortest song on the album, but I like it because it feels like a trailer to the rest of the body of work. Also 'Montana Sky.' There's a lot more acoustic guitar and real organic instruments that tap into a bunch of different influences, but we're aware of the fact that we're not a country act. Jon flipped it on its head — he's got a modern edge to everything he does, even if it has really classic elements."

Kevin: "'Vacation Eyes' is based on how my relationship started with my wife. We met on vacation — and continuing that love story every single day is how I want to live my life. It makes me want to be on the beach! It's just such a fun song about enjoying life."

Nick: "I'm torn between 'Little Bird,' which is a song about parenthood that will affect people in different ways, and 'Waffle House,' which was a last-minute addition. At first, 'Waffle House' was a bit of a head scratcher, but the more I listened to it, the more I loved it. I think it really encapsulates a moment in time for us. Musically it taps into some of my favorites: Doobie Brothers and Bee Gees, and others from that era. It's a really, really, fun song. We can't wait to play it live."

(Top) Ilya S. Savenok/Getty Images for iHeartRadio; (Bottom) Jessica Sheldon (4)

UTA

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JONAS BROTHERS

on receiving their well-deserved Star
on the Hollywood Walk of Fame

JONAS BROTHERS

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THE LAST 20 YEARS. WE CAN'T WAIT TO MAKE MORE HISTORY TOGETHER.
CONGRATULATIONS ON EARNING YOUR PLACE ON THE WALK OF FAME!

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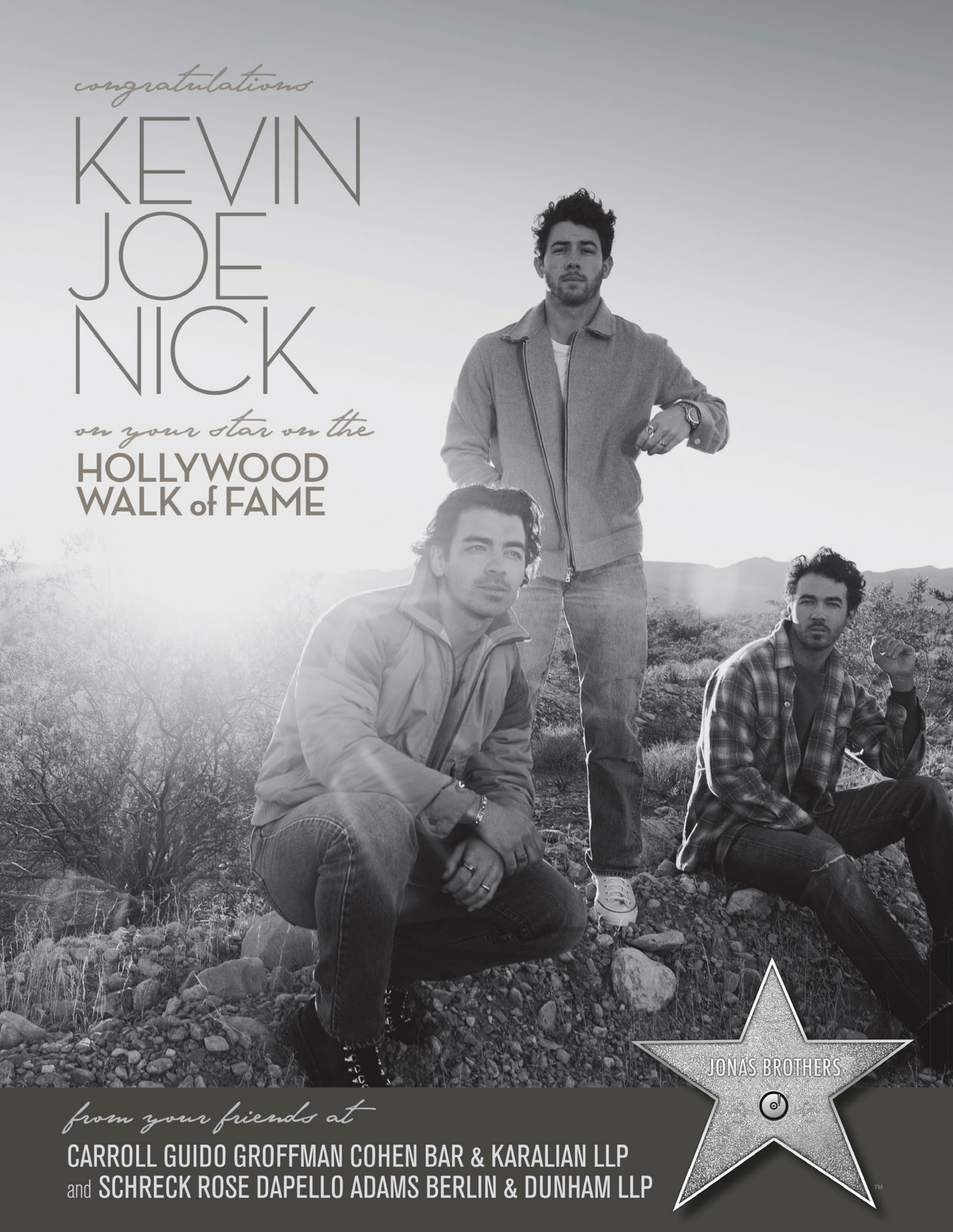

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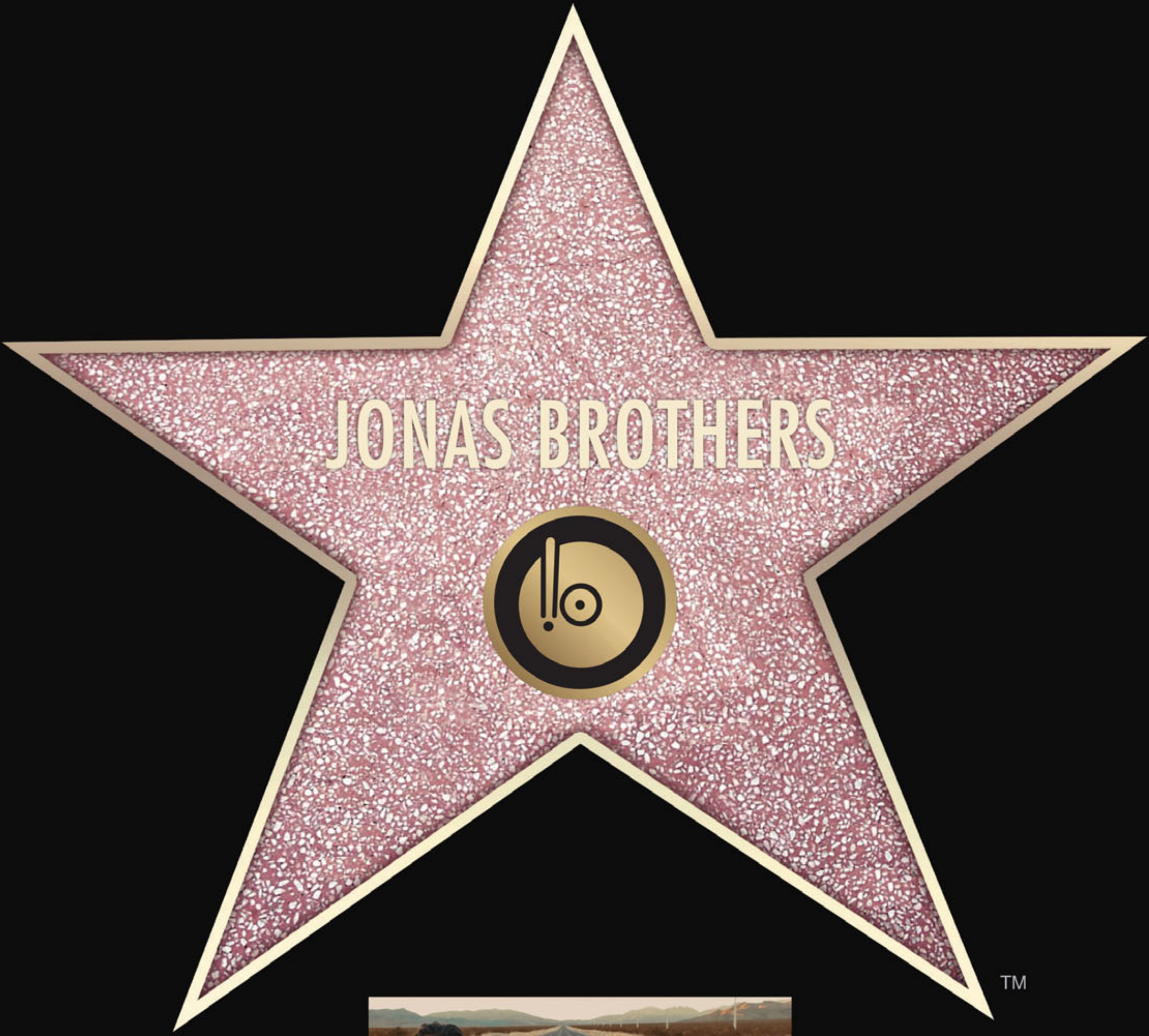

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G'Day Celebrates With U.S. Mates

Aussie org fetes 20 years of cultural and economic partnership ● *By Malina Saval*

G'Day USA, an American-based cultural and economic diplomacy program fostering creative and entrepreneurial partnerships between artists in Australia and the United States, will celebrate its 20th anniversary on Jan. 28 with a starry gala at the Skirball Cultural Center in Los Angeles.

John Berry, president of the American Australian Assn. and retired U.S. ambassador to Australia under President Barack Obama, calls G'Day USA "Australia's premier public, economic and cultural diplomacy program in the United States."

"Launched by the Australian government 20 years ago, G'Day USA has deepened the relationship between two great allies and showcased Australia's creative and innovative economy by bringing together the best of government, business and non-profit sectors," Berry says. "The highlight of course is the annual G'Day USA Arts Gala in Los Angeles that honors the very best of Australian talent."

Funds raised at the G'Day USA Arts Gala support scholarships from the American Australian Assn. to emerging artists studying in each other's country, with a special emphasis on Native American and Indigenous artists. Per Erin Gray, senior VP business engagement, partnerships & development at the American Australian Assn., $1.6 million in scholarships was awarded by the org just in 2022, and over the past 20 years, more than 570 scholarships have been given out.

R&B singer Mi-kaisha, a recipient of the 2019 American Australian Assn. Indigenous arts scholarship, will perform at this year's fete, along with Australian musical artist G Flip. Additionally, the gala will honor three prominent Australian artists: Sydney-born supermodel-entrepreneur Miranda Kerr, honored with the Excellence in the Arts award; "Avatar: The Way of Water" star Sam Worthington, who will receive the Excellence in Film & Television award; and 19-year-old rapper the Kid Laroi, who will be honored with the award for Excellence in Music.

→ Olivia Newton-John and John Travolta attend the 2018 G'Day USA Arts Gala; Mi-kaisha performs in 2019.

Newton-John/Travolta: Elaine Lee/G'DAY USA; Mi-kaisha: American Australian Association

Aussie singer-songwriter Delta Goodrem will top off the evening with a special tribute to legendary Grammy-winner Olivia Newton-John, who passed away in August after a lengthy battle with breast cancer.

"From the very beginning, she was involved with the program," says Berry. "We honored her, but she would regularly come and she would regularly perform, even if she wasn't being honored. And she would always be so gracious to whoever was winning that year. She was just such a bright light in the room."

But while Australia has made vast contributions to the entertainment world — from Nicolas Roeg's groundbreaking 1971 film "Walkabout" to the 1994 comedy juggernaut "Muriel's Wedding" — the G'Day gala is more than a celebration of performing talent.

Per Graeme Mason, CEO of Screen Australia, the event is "a wonderful opportunity to showcase just how much Australia has to offer both on and off screen."

"Australia and the U.S. have long had an extremely successful cultural, creative and commercial relationship & collaboration," adds Mason. "We're committed to deepening the creative and cultural connection with our American colleagues and fostering this valuable partnership for the future and see G'Day as a great part of that."

It was during his tenure as ambassador and throughout the course of his current position that Berry has come to "appreciate just how profound the relationship is" between Australia and the United States — culturally and politically.

"There's only one ally who has fought with [the United States] in every major military engagement since World War I — and that's Australia," Berry says. "It is an alliance of values. It is an alliance that's been sealed in blood. And it is an alliance that is vibrant today, in its economic engagement as well, in that America is the largest investor in Australia, with over $2 trillion of economic activity between the two nations."

TIPSHEET

WHAT: G'Day USA Arts Gala
WHEN: 7:30 p.m. Jan. 28
WHERE: Skirball Cultural Center, Los Angeles
WEB: gdayusa.org

Swedish Festival Champions New Nordic Talent

Göteborg Film Festival looks to the future while inviting known faces back ● *By Marta Bałaga*

Göteborg Film Festival, running from Jan. 27-Feb. 5, will welcome back some familiar faces during its 46th edition. But it keeps on looking out for skillful newcomers, says Josef Kullengård, head of industry at the festival and the Nordic Film Market. "We want to be the place where you discover new Nordic talent," he tells *Variety*.

"It's a strong year for projects in development, while the work-in-progress section combines established directors such as Erik Poppe [presenting 'Quisling'] with first-timers or people like Ulaa Salim, following 'Sons of Denmark' with 'Eternal.' It definitely mirrors what the current Nordic film landscape looks like."

Oscar-winning actor Alicia Vikander will also introduce a new wave of directors, unveiling films produced by the students of educational film program Alicia Vikander Film Lab 2022.

"When she was appointed honorary fellow by the Sten A. Olsson Foundation for Research and Culture, her response was: 'Let's do something with this money,'" artistic director Jonas Holmberg says.

"This has been a year of 'nepo babies' and we need to open up the field of filmmaking. Every step in that direction is important for democracy, but also for art."

The Swedish festival will screen 250 titles, with its opener, "Exodus" by Abbe Hassan, competing for the title of best Nordic film, alongside Malou Reymann's "Unruly" and Martin Skovbjerg's "Copenhagen Does Not Exist," penned by Eskil Vogt.

↑ Frederikke Aspöck's "Empire" will unspool at the Göteborg Film Festival.

Meta Film

But Nordic countries are also opening up about their role in colonial history, assures Holmberg, mentioning Ole Giæver's "Ellos Eatnu — Let the River Flow," "Godland" and period drama "Empire" by Frederikke Aspöck, focusing on the slaves in Danish West Indies.

"Previously, the Nordics didn't consider themselves to be 'guilty' [of any wrongdoings]. Now, artists are starting to reflect on these issues," he says.

"Holy Spider" star and head of the Nordic Competition jury Zar Amir Ebrahimi will address the current situation in Iran, leading a demonstration in support of those who have been imprisoned. The fest will also continue to champion Ukraine, dedicating the Focus Section to the concept of homecoming with directors Antonio Lukich and Eva Dzhyshyashvili coming back after their residency in Göteborg.

"This idea was born through the experience of welcoming these filmmakers to our city, our office and our life," says Holmberg, also mentioning the recipient of the Nordic Honorary Dragon Award Jan Troell, famous for "The Emigrants."

"So many of our most beloved stories are about people coming home, experiencing it anew. When millions are forced to flee, we want to rethink this topic."

On the industry side, the fest will host nonprofit organization Ukraine Content Club and present two series in development: FILM.UA Production's "Those Who Stayed" and LLC Ideas Bank's "Alchemskys Mystery," set in 1901.

Although Göteborg's 10th Nostradamus Report will be presented at Cannes' Marché du Film in May, its team still tries to anticipate future trends. With TV Drama Vision focusing on cross-border serial storytelling and inviting Josef Fares to discuss exploring narratives in gaming and film.

Fares, who debuted with "Jalla! Jalla!," is also the founder and creative director of Hazelight Studios.

"We started to look into the future of the industry more than a decade ago. We always talk about it during our sessions and our attendees know that," says Cia Edström, head of program at Nordic Film Market and TV Drama Vision, which will showcase more than 40 series, from Gabriela Pichler's "Painkiller" to Finland's "Dance Brothers."

But there is always room for surprise, this year coming courtesy of Ruben Östlund, Göteborg's new honorary president who is set to "direct" the audience during a special screening of "Triangle of Sadness."

Östlund says: "I have been very interested in the cinema culture of our times. The most unique 'selling point' of cinemas, and I think most people will agree with me, is that we are sitting there together. It changes the way we are processing images, because later, someone might ask us what we think. We need to reflect on what we are seeing.

"The problem is that cinema culture looks quite differently around the world. In Sweden, the audience is much more passive. We don't express what we feel, we don't help the film we like, and we don't criticize the film we don't like.

"In certain cases, the audience needs to adapt when it comes to cinema, in order to make it blossom. You are participating in a show, in an event. It doesn't mean you have to be a fan, but you need to take a stand."

TIPSHEET

WHAT: Göteborg Film Festival
WHEN: Jan. 27-Feb. 5
WHERE: Göteburg, Sweden
WEB: goteborgfilmfestival.se

2023
VISIONARY AWARDS

CJ ENM's 2023 Visionary Awards Celebrate Originality ✦

CJ ENM hosted its third annual awards, introducing the next vision of entertainment together with honorees and key industry figures

By Virginia Yapp

"I hope that everyone here at the 2023 Visionary Awards can share their inspiration and experience," said Miky Lee, CJ Group's vice chairwoman. "As a global entertainment powerhouse, CJ ENM will ensure talented artists and creators can live up to their full potential and dreams."

With a reputation as a leading producer of world-class entertainment — already on the rise with globally renowned hits like "Parasite" in 2019 and "Decision To Leave" in 2022 — entertainment powerhouse CJ ENM hosted the third annual Visionary Awards in Seoul on Jan. 8, opening with a congratulatory message from the group's vice chairwoman.

The Visionary Awards recognize key figures whose forward-thinking achievements signal a new vision for the future of entertainment. This year's recipients were selected by quantitative data analytics and a panel of around 60 industry experts not only for their achievement and creativity within their field, but for their global impact, experimentation and influence outside of the industry.

"Where does the power of K-entertainment that transcends borders come from? For us, the answer to this question is originality, which is something unique each individual holds," explained Koo Chang-gun, the company's CEO. "This is why we've held the Visionary Awards since 2020. We believe the power of entertainment comes directly from the people."

At the center of CJ ENM's mission is its unwavering dedication to elevating Korean stories and culture. For over 25 years, the company has been leading the globalization of K-content. The Visionary Awards mirror the company's journey and brand philosophy to discover "Untold Originals."

Each recipient of the award, as demonstrated by their originality, innovative approach and ability to set new trends, echoes CJ ENM's vision in their own unique ways. Actor Kim Hye Soo ("Juvenile Justice," "Under the Queen's Umbrella") has established a distinctive, undeniable presence, using her craft to mesmerize audiences, while actor Don Lee ("The Roundup") has transformed his unique character into the core of his evolving film franchise. Actor Park Eun Bin ("Extraordinary Attorney Woo") has used her genuine character to fight against prejudices, showcasing how one's originality can make an impact. Director Park Chan Wook ("Decision To Leave") has become globally renowned for his exceptional creativity and mise-en-scène, while girl group (G)I-DLE ("Nxde") has begun reaching new heights as a rising talent, thanks to its members' originality and unrelenting drive.

Actor/singer IU ("Broker") used her originality to empathize with her audience across genres and generations alike, while actor/director Lee Jung Jae ("Squid Game," "Hunt") further expanded the presence of K-entertainment across the globe as an iconic creator, with both being recognized by CJ ENM for their ability to transcend borders. Screenwriter Chung Seo Kyung ("Decision To Leave," "Little Women") went against the grain, fighting stereotypes with her creative perspective and storytelling capabilities. Nah Yung Suk, the producer behind "Earth Arcade," brings many generations together with his trademark variety shows, establishing his own universe, while producer Lee Jin Ju is noted for creating her own unique genre in reality TV with an immersive case in "EXchange."

Expertly summarizing the ethos of the Visionary Awards during his acceptance speech, Don Lee noted, "It's my hope that the Visionary recipients will try their best to create entertaining content for the global audience that transcends language and boundaries."

The night ended with an open house where industry professionals gathered to network and celebrate the upcoming year with representatives from the leaders of K-content studios and K-pop labels. Throughout the evening, CJ ENM reaffirmed its dedication to supporting creators and artists, propelling the future of entertainment forward through an installation inspired by a supernova, symbolizing the honorees' explosive capabilities and talents. ✦

PHOTOS COURTESY OF CJ ENM

2023 Visionary
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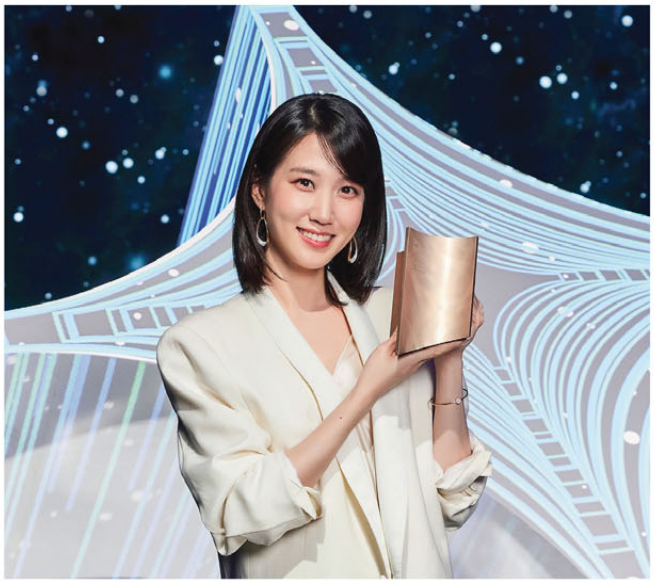

2023
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> ***Where does the power of K-entertainment that transcends borders come from? CJ ENM believes the answer to this question is originality, which is something unique each individual holds.***
>
> KOO CHANG-GUN, CEO, CJ ENM

PHOTOS COURTESY OF CJ ENM

The 2023 Visionary Awards ceremony, held on Jan. 8, included, clockwise from top right, Park Eun Bin; Chung Seo Kyung; Don Lee (top left and left) and Nah Yung Suk; (G)I-DLE: Minnie (left), Miyeon, Soyeon, Yuqi and Shuhua.

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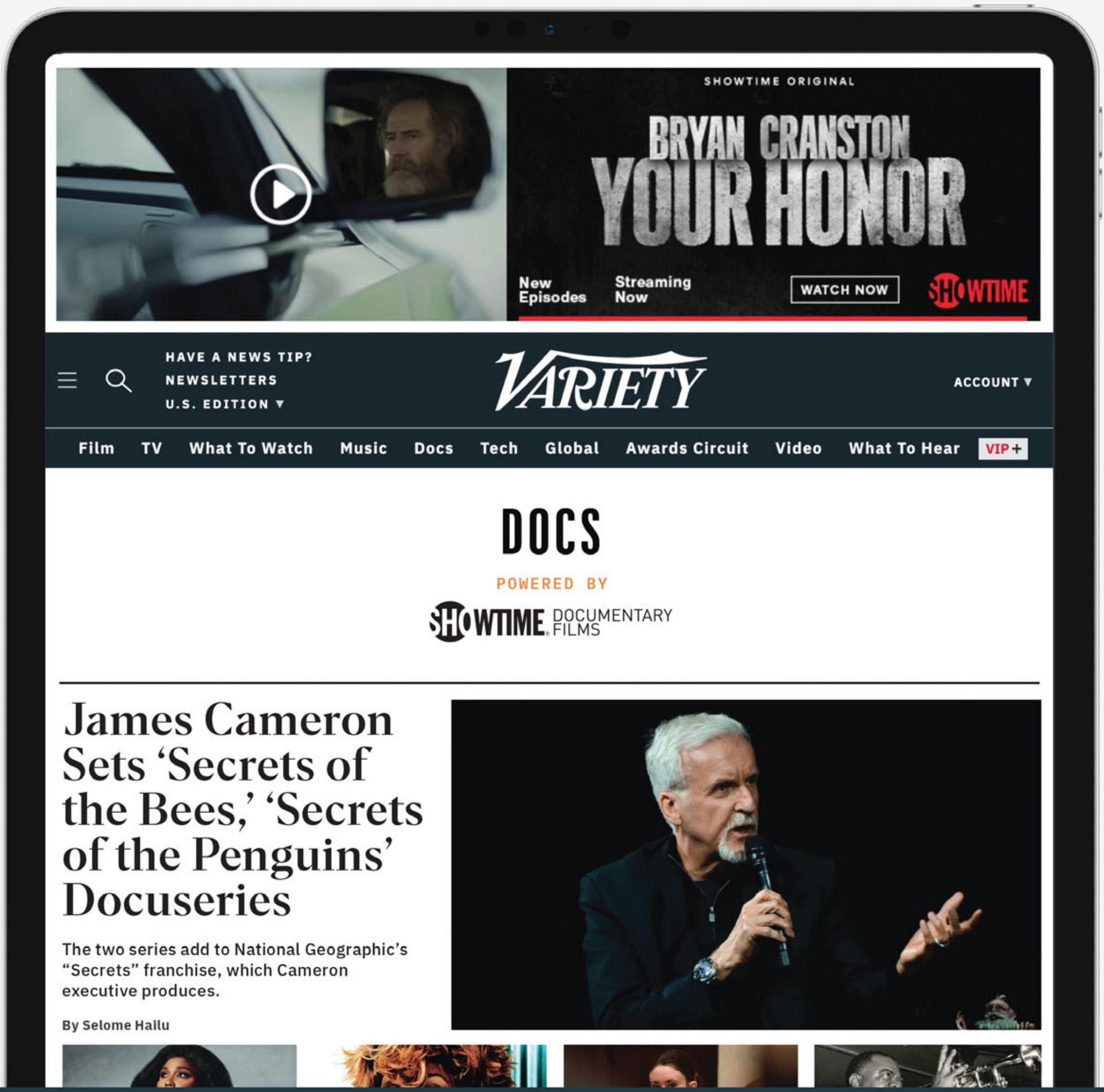
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By Selome Hailu

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REVIEWS

Cat Person

By Peter Debruge

FILM REVIEW

Director: Susanna Fogel

Starring: Emilia Jones, Nicholas Braun, Geraldine Viswanathan

Emilia Jones and Nicholas Braun star in Sundance selection "Cat Person."

Courtesy of Sundance Institute

In the wickedly ambiguous Sundance conversation-starter "Cat Person," two singles a half-generation apart see their relationship quite differently. Even the word "relationship" is relative. Margot (Emilia Jones), a 20-year-old sophomore, works the concession stand at a repertory theater, where she flirts with a patron (Nicholas Braun of "Succession") who looks kinda like a young Nicolas Cage. Not "Valley Girl" young. More like "Wild at Heart"-era Nicolas Cage, minus the charisma. Margot describes him as "tall, dark and … problematic" to her roommate. Still, she's intrigued enough to give him her number. The two start to text, sending what could aptly be called "mixed messages," and things get complicated.

A co-writer on Gen Z coming-of-ager "Booksmart," director Susanna Fogel likes complicated. Back in 2017, "Cat Person" originated as a fiction entry in The New

Yorker, but quickly became something more. Long before anyone thought of adapting it to the big screen, Kristen Roupenian's short story struck a nerve with the culture, which was already grappling with its understanding of seduction and consent.

Open to conflicting interpretations from any number of perspectives, "Cat Person" invited debate, engaging directly with the gray areas of modern dating. Fogel and screenwriter Michelle Ashford ("Masters of Sex") make the surprising choice of treating the material more as genre fare than as a traditional rom-com, where the meet-cute isn't and what follows is no one's idea of a date movie. Three years after "Promising Young Woman," they've given us a film that's funny in places, horrifying in others and all but destined to be a reference point in future discussions about courtship. We're a long way from "Say Anything," but a lot closer to reality, and that's saying something.

Near the beginning, Fogel features a quotation from "The Handmaid's Tale" author Margaret Atwood that hits so squarely on the nose, it nearly gives the film a black eye: "Men are afraid that women will laugh at them. Women are afraid that men will kill them." Though some might beg to differ with that assessment, as written the movie starts to feel like an exercise in proving Atwood right. To that end, Margot is prone to "Ally McBeal"-style flashes of fantasy and fear, cutting to some extreme scenario — like being attacked by Robert, the Red Vines-buying movie buff she's been texting — only to snap abruptly back to sanity. Repeat the trick enough, and audiences start to get skeptical.

> **"Director Susanna Fogel and screenwriter Michelle Ashford have given us a film that's funny in places, horrifying in others and destined to be a reference point in future discussions about courtship."**

That's a healthy attitude to have here. Fogel presents "Cat Person" as Margot's subjective experience, which involves a certain lack of self-awareness. Margot initiates the flirtation at the concession stand and skips past the games of hard to get, trading hundreds of text messages, which multiply across the screen like bacteria in a petri dish. Robert is older, knows what he wants and has a full-time job, characteristics that suggest a power differential. But youth and beauty give Margot an edge she's only just discovering, and this guy — awkward, sort of pathetic, a bad kisser — is like an experiment.

Ashford has done an admirable job of expanding the short story, adding a wild last act and fleshing out Margot's world to include a bestie (Geraldine Viswanathan), a mother (Hope Davis) and a teacher (Isabella Rossellini) who serve as sounding boards for some of her doubts.

Margot is figuring things out, and her sexual agency is one of the elements being workshopped. It's tough for movies to convey the nuances of screen-to-screen communication — the way that micro-pauses, punctuation, pop culture references all matter. "Cat Person" captures those dynamics without boring us with their banter.

The film's tone is light, but laced with suspicion and potential menace. Meanwhile, the title refers to the idea of Robert that Margot constructs in her head, extrapolated from a flurry of messages they exchange over a matter of days. When she finally goes to his place, she sees no sign of the two cats he'd mentioned.

The ensuing scene is the most divisive part of Roupenian's story. Some readers have interpreted it as assault. The script invents a fascinating device, giving Margot an out-of-body double. "Do we want to do this?" her conscience/subconscious asks. Jones, who starred in "CODA," can be coy one moment, caustic the next. Her character is composed of intriguing contradictions, which come off as all the more human in the actor's hands. "It's just easier to get it over with," she tells herself.

If the movie's sex scene reveals a man afraid of being laughed at, its daring third act confronts a different terror: men's fear of being accused. Fogel takes that anxiety to outrageous extremes, putting Margot in real peril, but in the end Robert feels endangered too, and the casting of Braun (who's less threatening than readers will have imagined) makes sense when the tables turn. The cultural conversation has evolved fast enough to give creeps pause and honorable men whiplash, and "Cat Person" will likely prove an important catalyst for further analysis. It's a squirmy, uncomfortable movie no teenager wants to watch with their mom, but maybe everyone should — required viewing for freshman year.

CREDITS: (U.S.-France) A StudioCanal presentation, in association with The New Yorker Studios. (International sales: StudioCanal Intl., Paris.) **Producers:** Helen Estabrook, Jeremy Steckler. **Executive producers:** Daniel Hank, Susanna Fogel, Gino Falsetto, Michelle Ashford, Anna Marsh, Shana Eddy-Grouf, Rachel Henochsberg, Elizabeth Banks, Max Handelman. **Director:** Susanna Fogel. **Screenplay:** Michelle Ashford, based on the short story by Kristen Roupenian. **Camera:** Manuel Billeter. **Editor:** Jacob Craycroft. **Music:** Heather McIntosh. Reviewed at Wilshire Screening Room, Jan. 13, 2023. In Sundance Film Festival (Premieres). **Running time:** 118 MIN. **Cast:** Emilia Jones, Nicholas Braun, Geraldine Viswanathan, Hope Davis, Fred Melamed, Isabella Rossellini, Christopher Shyer, Liza Koshy

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Poker Face

By Daniel D'Addario

Natasha Lyonne stars in Peacock mystery series "Poker Face."

Phillip Caruso/Peacock

TV REVIEW

Mystery: Peacock (10 episodes; 6 reviewed); Jan. 26

Starring: Natasha Lyonne, Adrien Brody, Benjamin Bratt

Natasha Lyonne is not a performer who holds a lot in reserve. Her great gift is for charging into a scene and electrifying it with a stream of chatter, suddenly resetting the temperature for all those around her. It's a talent that self-consciously throws back to the screwball comedy era, and one that was leveraged well on shows including "Orange Is the New Black" and "Russian Doll." But one perhaps did not previously have a sense of this star as an actor with much of a poker face at all.

Which makes her casting on, yes, "Poker Face" an intriguing development, and a welcome chance to stretch her talent. Here, in collaboration with show creator Rian Johnson (of, most recently, the "Knives Out" films), Lyonne finds a new gear as a Columbo-esque accidental sleuth who perennially knows a little more than she's saying.

Not that she'd have you think that. In the first episode, Lyonne's Charlie tells a potentially sinister Las Vegas tycoon played by Adrien Brody, "I'm still pretty much a dumbass, and I'm doing just fine." She's sure she's about to be fired from her job as a casino cocktail waitress, and is serene about it; the character is a profound underachiever, capable of detecting any lie (and, as such, dominating at the card table) but content to take whatever job comes her way.

As can happen in Vegas, things get out of hand, and Charlie ends up on the lam, smashing her smartphone with a rock before taking a long pull from a Coors Light and hitting the road. The America she meanders through in the following episodes is one of boundless venality and small cruelties: Every town Charlie pulls into presents her with a murder to untangle, a cause she takes up with somebody's-got-to-do-it gumption.

The crimes Charlie investigates are not difficult to crack — and, as with "Columbo," we're ahead of the game, watching what has happened first, before our detective puzzles it out over the next hour or so. But the stories are creatively built and beautifully cast (my favorite installment of the first six that were provided to critics concerns a pair of dinner-theater actors played by Ellen Barkin and Tim Meadows). And Lyonne fits into them jaggedly, usually just encountering a small drama and unable to resist the temptation to involve herself. There's a canniness to the Lyonne performance, a careful calibration of her zaniness. Charlie is garrulous and nosy, but she has an instinct for manipulation and for self-preservation. She carefully wheedles information from her sources, and as carefully ducks out of the danger that we aren't allowed to forget for too long is right on her heels.

Which makes "Poker Face" a double pleasure — a road narrative with different characters cropping up all the time, with a backbone made up of Lyonne's clever performance and the threat of violence she's just barely outsmarting. Surely one of the strongest series yet to launch on Peacock, this streaming drama feels like the best sort of vintage, comfortably spread-out TV. This elegant set of mystery stories allows an established star the time and space to crack a new sort of case, that of how to evolve a familiar persona and bring fans along for the ride.

CREDITS: Executive producers: Rian Johnson, Ram Bergman, Natasha Lyonne, Nena Rodrigue, Iain B. Macdonald, Nora Zuckerman, Lilla Zuckerman. 60 MIN. **Cast:** Natasha Lyonne, Adrien Brody, Angel Desai, Audrey Corsa, Benjamin Bratt, Brandon Michael Hall, Charles Melton, Chelsea Frei, Cherry Jones, Chloë Sevigny, Clea DuVall, Colton Ryan, Danielle MacDonald, Dascha Polanco, Ellen Barkin, Hong Chau, Jasmine Aiyana Garvin, Jameela Jamil, Joseph Gordon-Levitt, Judith Light, Leslie Silva, Lil Rel Howery, Luis Guzmán, Megan Suri, Niall Cunningham, Nicholas Cirillo, Nick Nolte, Reed Birney, Rhea Perlman, Ron Perlman, Rowan Blanchard, S. Epatha Merkerson, Shane Paul McGhie, Simon Helberg, Stephanie Hsu, Tim Blake Nelson, Tim Meadows

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Jack Champion

"We had this acting troupe that would basically re-act what the actors did, just for my sake."

By Todd Gilchrist

John Russo/Disney

In "Avatar: The Way of Water," Jack Champion stands out as Spider — and not simply because he's frequently the only human in scenes with the computer-generated nine-foot-tall Na'vi. Spider is a remnant of the Sky People left behind on Pandora after the events of the original film. Raised by Jake Sully (Sam Worthington) and, rather reluctantly, his wife Neytiri (Zoe Saldaña) alongside their own children, Spider eventually faces a test of loyalty — side with his family or his species — a difficult decision that Champion skillfully depicts. It's his biggest role to date in an acting career that began eight years ago, when he was a preteen, with a small part in "American Genius." Next up, he'll appear in horror sequel "Scream 6" and with Pedro Pascal in "Freaky Tales," from "Captain Marvel" directors Anna Boden and Ryan Fleck. Just days after wrapping the latter film, Champion jumped on a Zoom call to discuss the challenges of matching eyelines and managing character emotions in "The Way of Water."

Things you didn't know about Jack Champion

→

Age: 18

Hometown: Blacksburg, Va.

Cinematic feat: Although he occasionally wore shoes that looked like feet in "The Way of Water" ("Your toe goes in a little hole," he says), Champion was mostly barefoot in his scenes.

● **How much did you know about the role when you first auditioned?** I thought my name was Monk — short for Monkey Boy — and they said that everything including live action was going to be done by October of 2018. I don't think they were lying, [but] no one could really expect how long it was going to go. Then, of course, when COVID hit, it just screwed everything and delayed everything. But I didn't really know much other than he was a human raised around the Na'vi, and I didn't know who his biological parents were.

● **How did you prepare for a role that was very physical and whose costume mimicked what the Na'vi wear?** It was like, "He's like Tarzan." So it was just kind of like, "OK, probably going to be half-naked." And then luckily during filming, I got with my trainer Josh Murillo, and he helped me go from a pudgy 12-year-old to a pretty ripped 16-year-old.

● **You are in many cases the only human in scenes that are otherwise completely CGI. What were the challenges of adapting to that?** We had this acting troupe that would basically re-act what the actors did, just for my sake, but they'd wear this giant Na'vi puppet on their shoulders, so there'd be a torso here and then a head up here, and then they'd control the arms with little sticks — foam Na'vi that were actually 10 feet tall for us to look at.

● **How much of the physical space was built out?** Anytime you see me doing anything, they actually built whatever I'm running on — pieces of the ship deck — and they could maneuver however they want for the scene. But it was still super slippery because they'd have to dump buckets of water on me to look like I'd just gotten out of the ocean, and then I'd have to sprint uphill on this slippery ship deck.

● **You're in "Scream 6" — and a horror movie is a little bit of a rite of passage for a young actor in Hollywood these days. How meaningful was it for you to be part of that franchise?** I have to go on record — before being cast, I was one of the biggest fans of "Scream." I have so much respect for the legacy of the franchise. Obviously, I can't really say much about it, but I can assure people that it's a really good story.

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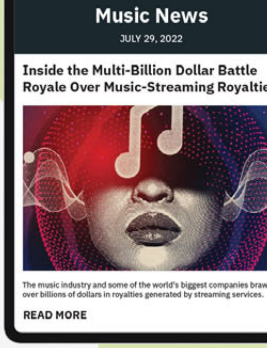

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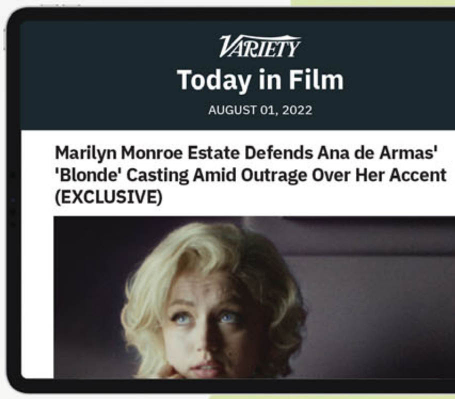

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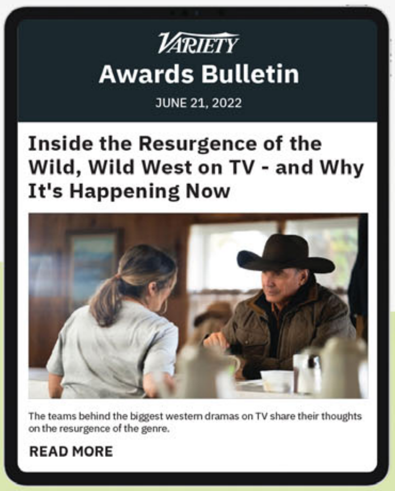

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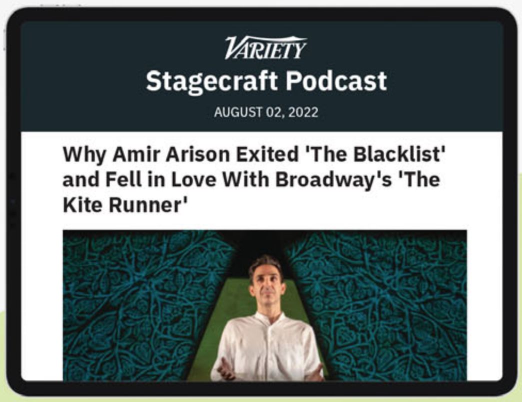

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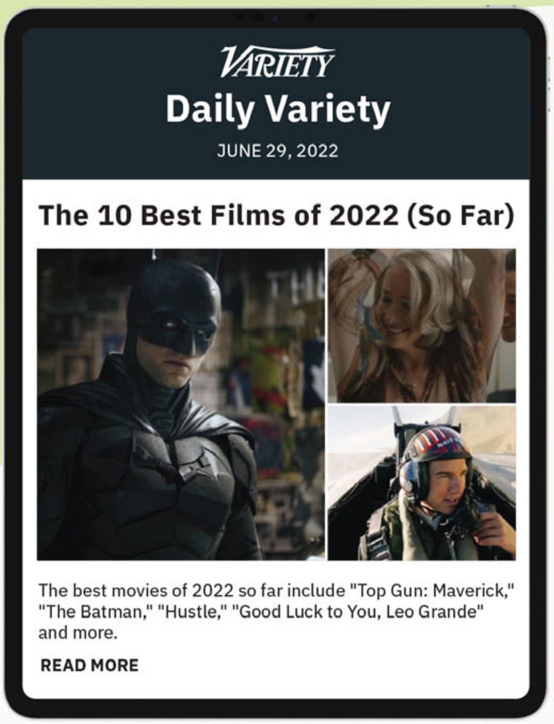

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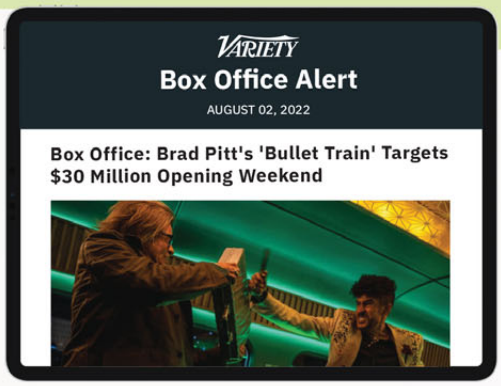

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